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Vol. I

BOB ROLICK; OR, WHAT WAS HE BORN FOR?

By PETER PAD,

Author of "Bob Rollick, the Yankee Notion Drummer," "The Shortys Married and Settled Down," "Ebenezer Crow," "Stumpy or, Little, but Oh, My!" "Chips and Chin-Chin," "Stuttering Sam," "Tommy Bounce," "Tom, Dick, and the —," "Shorty; or, Kicked into Good Luck," "Tommy Dodd," "Shorty in Search of His Dad," "Tumbling Tim," "The Shortys' Trip Around the World," etc., etc., etc.



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CHAPTER I.

"SAY, young fellow, what's your name?"

"Bob."

"Bob what?"

"I give it up, boss."

"Give it up?"

"Bob's my front name, but I guess they forgot ter give me a tail to my kite."

"And that is the only name you've got?"

"Well, the boys call me Bob Rollick sometimes."

"What for?"

"Well, I suppose it's because I'm a happy, rollickin' sort of a hairpin."

"Quite appropriate; and, seeing you have no other, I'd keep it if I were you. Here—here is a quarter for luck."

"Thank you, boss."

The above little dialogue took place between a customer who had been having his boots shined, and a smart, bright, little fellow, with whom we shall presently become better acquainted.

He was about ten years of age, very handsome, and uncommonly intelligent, a general favorite with all who knew him, altho he was but a waif—a nobody's boy.

He had never known who or what his parents were. Somebody had brought him up to about five years of age, and then he found himself on the wide world without even the semblance of a home. Whether the person who had taken about a half-way care of him up to that time was any relation to him or not, he never knew. In fact, he knew but little about him, anyway.

Thus, alone, he wandered aimlessly around, child-like, for a long time, or until he became hungry, when he walked boldly up to a cake stand and helped himself.

But when it was found that he had no money, the old woman who kept the stand proceeded to take him over her knee, and give him a good spanking, after which she told him to go about his business, and never dare to invite himself to dine with her again.

This made little Bob feel exceedingly serious for several moments as he walked away, rubbing the seat of his ragged trousers; but finally the comical side of the affair struck him, and he began to laugh at the idea of getting his bellyful of cake, and paying for it by being spanked.

That night he and another little waif put up at an aristocratic hotel, in the shape of a dry-goods box, which they good-naturedly shared together, and slept as sweetly as though on the nicest bed.

This little fellow was a newsboy, and as they became very good friends, he initiated Bob into the mysteries of the business the next day by allowing him to sell a portion of his papers.

This the handsome little fellow did with the greatest ease, for people would buy of him much quicker than of a less interesting boy, and before he had been in the business an hour, he had received extra change enough to enable him to buy half a dozen papers on his own account, and in this way he first got into business.

Then he found a home in the Newsboys' Lodging House, that very excellent institution, and he not long afterward took up the other profession of blacking boots, in which guise we are introduced to him now.

But in the meantime he had received some education in the Lodging House, and being naturally very apt at learning, he was quite as far advanced at the age of ten as most boys are who have all the advantages.

And he probably would have learned much more than he did had he not been so given to fun and all sorts of mischief. The fact of his forlorn position in the world, without a living relative that he knew of, did not make him a whit the more sober; for, to tell the truth, he never knew what such relations were, and, of course, did not feel the want of them.

At the moment of his introduction to the reader, Bob Rollick was both a newsboy and a bootblack, managing to make a fair living, and having heaps of fun all the while, but, of course, not laying up a very large bank account. He was a well-built fellow of his age, and could hold his own with the best of them, either in business, fun, or fighting.

But it was about this time that really the first great event of his life took place, for up to this time the things which had happened to him were only what happen to thousands of boys who are thrown out upon the world of city life.

He had a corner on Union Square at this time, where he had just given the man a shine with whom he had held the conversation before written, and Bob thus mused as he looked after the generous customer:

"Guess Bob Rollick is good enough for me. Everybody calls me Bob Rollick, and what do I care? Maybe 'tis Bob Rollick, who knows? Yes, that's the question, who knows? Wish I did. Wonder who I am, anyway? Maybe I'm like Topsy, and never had a father or mother. But who cares?" he added, to himself, as he commenced to gun for another customer who wanted his under-pinning touched up.

At that instant a cry attracted his attention.

"Halloo, what's that?" he asked, looking in the direction, and instantly darting across the street.

A horse, with a lady rider, was dashing up Fourteenth street at a furious pace, having become unmanageable, and the alarmed, idiotic crowd began to yell for the animal to stop.

Bob watched the opportunity and by a quick

movement, caught hold of the bridle, and clung to it like death to a coon, finally succeeding in bringing the frightened horse to a standstill.

The lady fainted, and a policeman came up just in time to catch her falling body in his arms.

She was carried to a drug store near by, where restoratives were applied, while Bob still held the horse, and received the compliments of the crowd who gathered around him.

But he led the animal slowly toward the drug store, and of course the crowd went along, and reaching the front of it, he waited for the rider to return and take him off his hands, as he wanted to get back to his business.

Meantime the lady had revived, and of course remembered all that had happened.

"Where is the youth who risked his life to save mine?" she asked.

"He's outside with the horse," said the policeman.

"Oh, bring him to me that I may thank and reward him!" said she, earnestly.

The officer turned and called Bob into the store.

"Oh, noble youth, what shall I give you for your gallant conduct?" she asked.

Bob had it on his tongue to say "give us a rest," but he didn't.

"You needn't give me anything, ma'am."

"Nothing?"

"No; it's only fun to catch horses."

"Ah! you'll make a splendid policeman if you live to be a man," said the officer, admiringly.

"Oh, he will be something greater than that," said the lady.

"Gracious, madam, what could be greater than a member of the Broadway Squad?"

She didn't answer his conundrum.

"What is your name, my boy?"

"Bob Rollick."

"Where do you live?"

"Oh, most anywhere," he replied, smiling.

"What! have you no home?"

"Newsboys' Lodging House, sometimes."

"Are you a waif?"

"No, I'm a bootblack, ma'am."

"Have you any parents?"

"Nary."

"Well, Robert, I am very sorry. But I am rich and able to reward you. Here is my card. Come and see me to-morrow and I will see what can be done to better your condition in life," she said, handing him a card, bearing the name of Miss Sophia Gnarley, with an aristocratic address. "Will you surely come?"

"Yes, ma'am, but I don't want any reward just for catching a horse," said he, honestly.

"Nevertheless you deserve one, for you saved my life, and I insist upon repaying you."

"Go on, you little fool," whispered the officer. "She may have a political pull somewhere and get you a good billet."

"Oh, that be blowed. What do I want of a billet. You can't shine boots with a billet," and he turned away, not knowing what a billet was.

"Officer, will you have my horse sent to Mr. Biggs' stable, and call a carriage for me? I dare not trust myself on his back again."

"Certainly, miss," and he went to do so, while Bob made his way back to his corner again.

"No; will you, though?" he exclaimed, starting up joyously.

"Indeed I will, for, as I said before, I have taken a great interest in you. I have nobody in the world to care for and love, and if you will only love me and try to improve, I will do all I can for you," said she, heartily.

"Thank you, ma'am, but it don't seem possible," said Bob, bashfully.

"What does not seem possible?"

"That anybody should care for me."

"Why not, Robert?"

"Because nobody ever did."

"Very well, thank you. What time shall I return to-morrow?"

"Say at noon, and take lunch with me, and I wish to see the taste you display in selecting your new clothes," said she, rising as he started to go.

"All right, Aunt Sophia."

"Robert," and she took his hand. "Robert, kiss your Aunt Sophia."

Bob blushed like a booby. He had never kissed a lady before in his life. He had never asked to kiss one, and he certainly never had been asked to do so. But he had taken quite a



"Stop, I say!" he yelled, striking the desk in front of Frank Bloom, with a crack that made him leap to his feet. "Vot vas the meaning of all this nonsense? Hafe you all gone grazy?"

Before going any further we will just have a charcoal sketch of Miss Gnarley.

She was a rich maiden lady, about forty years of age, homely as sin, and as full of cranks as a sitting hen; or, at least, she was cranky in many things and romantic in others. But all her romance and her wealth never brought her a husband, for which she didn't appear to care much, as she regarded men generally as simply horrid, and not worth having.

This was the old gal that owed her life or limb to Bob Rollick, and to tell the truth, she took a genuine interest in him, as he learned the following day when he visited her.

Of course she questioned him, and he frankly told her all he knew about himself, which of course wasn't much; not enough to make a very large book of, at all events.

"Wee, w, Robert, how would you like to have me send you to school, and pay for your education?" she finally asked.

"I'd like an education first-rate," said he.

"And you must have one if you ever expect to rise in the world and ever become anything more than a bootblack. I have taken a great fancy to you, besides being grateful for what you did yesterday. Now, I know of a nice boarding-school where you can go, and I will buy you new clothes, and pay all your bills."

"But that is no reason why no one ever should. I am rich, and will take this method of rewarding you. Here is a fifty-dollar bill. Take it and buy yourself a complete outfit of clothing from head to foot, and return to-morrow. By that time I shall have completed arrangements for sending you to school."

"Thank you, ma'am," said Bob, manifesting much enthusiasm.

"Please don't call me 'ma'am.' I never was a ma'am to any one. Call me—call me Aunt Sophia, will you, please?"

"Certainly; of course I'll do anything to please you, Aunt Sophia."

"That is right; your aunt by adoption," she added, seeming much pleased.

"But what shall I do with my traps?"

"Your traps?"

"Yes, my blacking-box and brushes."

"Oh, well, do anything you like with them. You will probably never need them again."

"Hadn't I better keep them for old times' sake?"

"I would not. You are about to enter upon a new career, which will, I hope, be so much above the old one that you will want to forget it. But do as you like, Robert, if you have any feeling in the matter."

fancy to the generous old maid, even though she was homely, and so he braced himself like a little man, and returned the smack she gave him. After which he went from the house filled with curious emotions.

As for Miss Gnarley, it was probably the first time she had ever been kissed by anybody who came so near being a man, and it was a sort of new sensation to her. But so far as her kindness to Bob was concerned, it was genuine. He was such a manly little fellow, large of his age and well built, that she would undoubtedly have been in love with him in another way had he been old enough to warrant it. And yet it is hardly fair to say that she was not wholly disinterested and philanthropical.

As for Bob Rollick, he could scarcely believe his senses. Was it not a dream after all? Would he not presently wake up and find that he had been dozing upon his blacking-box somewhere?

A fifty-dollar bill!

He looked at it, rubbed his eyes, and looked at it again. He had never seen one before, or only seen such large bills displayed in brokers' windows, and for the life of him he could not tell whether it was good or bad; so he went to the first broker's he could find and got it changed into bills of a smaller denomination,

which of course convinced him that it was genuine.

"Oh, I guess not!" he exclaimed, as he pocketed the "boodle" and started for a clothing store. "Maybe I haven't struck a pudding! Oh, maybe not! What would the boys say if they knew it? Wait till I get my new harness, and see me down on'm! Well, perhaps they won't open their lookers!"

Delighted almost beyond measure, he proceeded to purchase his new outfit. Bob knew what was nice and what he wanted, even if he had never before had a chance to possess himself of it; and he was not long in getting into new clothing, from hat to boots, which he had never expected to nestle in.

Indeed, he came out just as stylish and nobby a looking boy as walked Broadway or Fifth avenue. Being naturally a good-looking fellow, the clothes only made him show all the better, although he had the good sense not to get proud or stuck up on account of the change in his dress.

But he made up his mind not to part with his tools, but to keep them as mementoes; for he did not know what the future had in store for him.

His visit to his old companions created a sensation. It was a scene worthy of an artist as they manifested their surprise at the unexpected change in Bob's harness, while the expressions they made were both comical and sentimental.

"Say, Bob, yer arn't givin' us taff?"

"No—square deal," said Bob, honestly.

"Bob, it's too much like ther stories we read in ther papers," said another.

"But some of them may be true, after all. I'll take my oath that this one is, and—see, I've got some of the sugar left," he added, pulling out ten dollars in bills and change.

"Whew!" exclaimed several of them, while it was evident that the story much impressed them.

"Now, boys, come over to the saloon, and I'll treat your bellies to a boss dinner—such as we used to get Thanksgiving and Christmas at the Newsboys' Lodging House," said Bob.

With a glad hurrah, they followed him, and while the feast was being prepared, he gave them a further account of his adventure and good fortune.

It was a very pleasant affair, and Bob was given a rousing send-off on the road which led to his new life, although they all not only envied him, but hated to part with such a jolly good fellow as he was.

The next day, at the appointed hour, Bob put in an appearance at the house of his adopted aunt.

To say that she was delighted to see him, would only be telling the truth. In fact, she was even more than delighted at seeing him look so much improved in his new dress, and became more affectionate than ever toward him.

Meantime she had made arrangements for him to go to Professor Backstrap's boarding-school, at College Point, on Long Island Sound. That night, however, he remained at the house of his benefactress, and slept on a softer bed than he had ever enjoyed before, where he indulged in dreams that were decidedly rosy-tinted and delightful.

This is the soft thing that Bob Rollick had, and now let us follow him to school, for there we shall know him better.

The boarding-school of Professor Backstrap, as before stated, was situated in the beautiful town of College Point, about twenty miles from New York, and on Long Island Sound.

Professor Backstrap was a German, with a high university education, a German corporosity, a German pronunciation of English, and a German idea of how youth should be educated, together with a German idea of how a refractory or mischievous boy should be punished.

He had about fifty pupils in his school, arranged in three classes—first, second and third, the third being the highest, and from which the pupils went to college.

These fifty scholars belonged to some of the

first families of New York and Brooklyn, and, like the sons of the majority of "first families," they were about as full of mischief as they make them. There was a gymnasium and playground attached to the school, and, as the school stood near the water, the boys had boat clubs and swimming contests, as well as base and football matches.

They were for the most part a brave and joyous lot of fellows, and when it was announced that a new "First-class" fellow was coming from New York to become a member of the school, there was considerable anxiety manifested to see what he looked like and what sort of stuff he was made of.

The following morning Professor Backstrap led Bob Rollick upon the platform, and, in a strong German accent, introduced him to the school.

The boys eyed him closely, and measured him up in their minds, while Bob, blushing and slightly confused at his new condition in life, was shown to his desk among the boys of the first class.

The general opinion was that the new scholar was a good boy, and "one of 'em," so far as looks went, but of course they were bound to find out whether he was or not.

Well, the school exercises went on as usual, Bob Rollick being given the lesson he was to study, and which he was to recite later in the day with the other members of the class, each one of whom watched him closely as they glanced at their own lessons.

The situation was new to Bob, for he had never been to such a school before, but he was smart enough to take it all in, and brace himself to do his level best at anything.

An hour had not passed before Bob had a chance to see something of his future companions.

"Ha! who strike me mit dot pea?" exclaimed Professor Backstrap, starting up from his desk, where he had been working on a mathematical problem.

Nobody acknowledged having thrown the pea, which hit him in the ear and lodged there, and the old fellow began to dance around and do all sorts of absurd things to dislodge the pea.

This, of course, set the whole school laughing, and Bob joined with the rest, naturally, for he instantly saw that he had struck a place where there was a heap of fun, and a company of boys who were just as good as they made them. And if there was anything in the world that delighted him more than another thing it was to find himself with such a gang.

"What!" yelled the old professor, wild with rage, as he saw a boy who was laughing more heartily, if possible, than the others. "Stop dot laughing, all of you, or I flog der whole school. Master Bimm, come oude here at once!" he yelled, pointing to Joe Bimm, a handsome fellow, about fourteen years of age. "I flogs you for dot laughing. Come here."

Poor Joe was tickled as the others were, but he did not suspect that he was laughing more heartily than his fellows were. He knew, however, that he was in for it anyhow, and reluctantly he walked toward the master, who stood with a ruler in his hand, and looking daggers.

"Down mit you! I show you 'boud dot laugh," said he, snaking unlucky Joe over a stool, face downward.

Then he went for him, his back being turned toward the school. He went for Joe, the school went for him. As if by premeditation, every scholar seized and burred a slate, book, or inkstand at Backstrap, hitting him in fifty different places.

That castigation ceased instantly, and Backstrap turned suddenly around.

Every boy was in his place, and instantly engaged upon his lessons.

Bob Rollick "tumbled," and sat with his face buried in his book.

CHAPTER II.

"Gott in Himmel! who vos dot?" exclaimed Professor Backstrap, as he ceased applying his ruler to the seat of Joe Bimm's trousers.

The boys looked up as innocently as young lambs.

"Who flung dem books und dings?" he again demanded, savagely.

No one spoke a word in reply.

"Master Rollick, come oude here!" said he, evidently thinking that the new scholar would be sure to tell the truth.

Bob obeyed with charming alacrity.

"Who flung dem books und dings at me?"

"I don't know, sir," replied Bob, and he told the truth, for he didn't know a single one of the fellows.

"You don't know?"

"No, sir; I am a stranger here."

"Go back mit your seat," said he, after looking with savage intent upon Bob's innocent face for a moment.

That answer made him solid with the school.

"I bade you dot I make efery one of you sick ter pay for dot funny pizness. Come oude here, Master Bingle, I starts mit you," said he, giving poor Joe one more crack as a finisher.

Joe went to his seat, although he felt much more like standing than sitting, and seizing young Bingle by the collar of his jacket, Backstrap yanked him over the stool of retribution, and began to warm his meat.

Before he had struck the second blow, however, another shower of books, slates, inkstands, etc., hit him from all directions, but he wasn't going to be choked out of that little business, and Bingle received fully half a dozen whacks that I will guarantee he remembers to this day.

Then he seized Tom King and snaked him out into the middle of the floor and over upon the stool.

"I didn't do anything!" whined Tom.

"All righd; bud I bade you dot I do somethings," replied Backstrap, going for him.

Every blow he struck the entire school would grunt in chorus, as though doing so on Tom's account, and this made the old professor more wild than ever.

But he got out of wind after flogging about a dozen of them, and concluded to postpone the job until some future time.

It had the desired effect, however, for he had selected the leaders to take his exercise upon, and the other boys concluded they didn't want any of that ruler in theirs, and so in the course of half an hour peace had been restored, and Backstrap was still boss.

"I make me some funerals mit dis school already righd ayay if I see some more aboud dem foolishings, und don'd you dot forgot. Now dem poys dot own dem books und tings come und pick em up puddy guick, I bade you," he said, pointing to the articles which strewed the floor.

This was a staggerer, for every fellow who obeyed would be giving himself dead away, and as each boy's name was in his book or on the frame of his slate, Backstrap would be sure to see, and most likely to punish them even more severely than he otherwise might, provided they claimed them.

So they all marched out and recovered their things, closely watched by the puffing professor, who put each one of them down for a future walloping.

Yes, nearly every one of them, with the exception of Bob Rollick, thus came under the ban, and a sheepish, sorry-looking lot they were. They had danced, and now had to settle with the piper.

But there was lots of fun in it for Bob, and he concluded to carry on his part of the deviltry, but to do it in a slightly different way. He resolved, first of all, to make himself solid with old Backstrap, and always to appear to be a good, honest boy.

And to tell truth the old professor did regard him as rather a nice boy from the start.

He knew Miss Gnarley to be a very estimable person, if not handsome, and he could not believe that she would take an interest in anybody who was not worthy, and so Bob had but little trouble in making a good impression on him.

But during the nooning, after dinner, the boys gathered around Bob, and commenced to measure him up, and see how much he weighed, so to speak.

Bill Cortlandt the bully of the school, was, of course, anxious to learn what his fighting weight was, and to see if he had the cheek to dispute his rule over the other boys.

Quite a number of them were out on the playground, and as Bob did not wish to appear too fresh, he hung back until Joe Bimm, a handsome fellow about his own age, invited him to go down and see what was going on.

Bob liked Joe the moment he saw him, and Joe liked Bob, and so they walked together from the dining hall, chatting by the way about Backstrap and the morning racket.

"Why not?"

"He's a fighter—always mussed. He's the bully of the school, he is."

Bob made no reply, and they watched the game in which two nines of the school were engaged for a few minutes. But presently Cortland approached them with an inquiring swagger, and took a look at Bob in an impudent way.

He was full of slang and bullying.

"Soy, what's yer front name, young feller?" he finally asked.

do," said Bill, provokingly, at which, of course, his admirers were bound to laugh.

"I'm here, waiting for customers," replied Bob, smiling.

"Oh, you are, hey? I guess I'll go in and buy something," replied Bill, and he aimed a vicious blow at Bob's nose.

Bob had had too many fellows aim at his nose not to know better than to allow them to get on to it, so he parried the blow and caught Bill in the eye, and again on the side of the head, sending him to grass in splendid style.

If a bombshell had exploded in the midst of



When Backstrap made a lunge, thinking he saw another chance for more fun with Soggy's nose, the Yorkshireman caught him around the waist, gave him the trip and a twist, and down he went, Soggy on top.

"Oh, he's a tough old rooster, and he's down on nearly every boy in his school," said Joe.

"Well, what makes the fellows stay?"

"Because they can't help it; leastwise, I can't. My dad says he hopes he'll whop some of the devilry out of me before I'm fitted for college, and I guess all the fellows' dads hope so, too."

Bob laughed heartily.

"The only way we can get out of it is to run away and go to sea, ar two or three of us are talking about that now."

"I should think there would be more fun staying here and fighting old Backstrap," said Bob, laughing.

"Well, I guess you wouldn't think so if he snaked you over that stool of repentance once."

"But I wouldn't give him a chance."

"What would you do—fight him?"

"No; for he'd be sure to down me."

"Well, what then?"

"I'd work on the strict Q. T."

"That's all very well to talk about, but I am afraid it won't work with him. Ah, here we are, and the fellows are having a game of ball," said Joe, as they reached the playground. "Say, don't take any notice of Bill Cortland, that big fellow standing there," he added, pointing to him.

"Bob," was his quiet reply, at the same time watching the game of ball.

"Where'd yer come from?"

"New York."

"Well, soy, how's yer muscle?"

"Oh, kinder able to keep me on my legs, I guess," replied Bob, still calmly.

"Oh, it is, eh? Can yer fight?"

"Not much, but I guess I can get away with you," he said, at which several of Cortland's followers cried: "Oh-ho!"

"Oh, yer can, eh? Put up yer dukes."

And Bob was instantly out of his jacket and in position.

"Come here, fellows, and see some fun," three or four of Cortland's friends called to those playing ball.

"What is it?"

"Come and see the duffer that says he can get away with Bill Cortland."

A crowd of boys quickly gathered, of course. Bob was ready, and with a contemptuous sneer, Bill was slowly taking off his jacket, which he handed to one of his friends.

"Don't weaken, Bob," whispered Joe Bimm.

But Bob made no reply. Bill put up his hands in a leisurely way, at the same time winking to some of his friends.

"Strike out, sonny, let's see what you can

that crowd of boys, it would not have startled them more than it did to see the bully of the school knocked out so nicely.

And while Bill was getting himself together for another round, the boys indulged in all sorts of comments complimentary to Bob, for although Bill was the bully of the school, he was cordially hated by every scholar in it.

"Good for you, Bob Rollick!" exclaimed Joe Bimm, who had himself been twice beaten by Cortland before he would acknowledge that he was the boss.

"How do you like it so far?" asked Bob, as Bill came up somewhat groggy.

"I'll show you," and again he aimed a blow at Bob.

But he didn't catch on that time, either, and received a bang on the nose that made the claret fly, and caused Bill to look sort of wild.

In vain he tried to get in on Bob, but it was no go. Bob had fought his way through the world in the rough-and-tumble battle of life until he had become a strong and scientific boxer.

But what galled Bill the most of all, was that he could not get in a single blow on his manly little adversary, who stood right up to the sport, and knocked him out every time.

Bill saw that his laurels were about to be

stripped from his brow, and it made him desperate. He had been the bully of the school so long that he could not bear to resign it now, and especially to a boy smaller and younger than himself.

So after resting a moment, during which he was busy wiping the blood from his leaking nose, he set his teeth firmly together with a grating sound which they could all hear, and nerv'd himself for the last grand attempt to turn the tide of battle in his favor.

To tell the truth, his object was to rush in and clench, for a fall, fully believing that he could throw Bob, and when he once had him down he could pummel him to his heart's content.

And probably he might have thrown Bob had it come to a clench, for he was both larger and stronger, and Bob knew it.

But when he rushed toward him he avoided him by a quick spring to one side, and giving him the toe as he passed, Bill went sprawling upon the grass, amid the cries of "Bully-bully!" from the crowd of scholars.

Bill was no slouch if he was a bully, and regaining his feet quickly, he went for Bob again.

But Bob was there every time, and when Bill attempted to grapple with him again, he avoided him as neatly as before, but instead of tripping him, he gave him a lug under the north ear that knocked him completely out of time.

"The king is dead—long live the king!"

The old saying is just as true with boys as with men.

The king of the school was knocked out, and a new one stood in his tracks.

There were some pretty good fighters among those boys, but they had never yet seen a fellow of Bob's age who had displayed so much coolness and science, and they were not slow in proclaiming him king.

They gathered around him, shook his hand, and in various ways transferred their allegiance from Bill Cortland to Bob Rollick.

Joe Bimm was fairly beside himself with delight, for his boss enemy had been thwarted, and the school was free from his tyranny.

But, of course, Bill was not a bit pleased with the way things had turned out, and as he picked himself up and walked away, he threatened everybody with all the terrible things he could think of.

"All right, old man; only don't pick a fellow up again before you know how much he weighs," said Bob, as a parting salute.

The school bell chimed with the laughter that followed this, and happy as they could be, they escorted Bob Rollick to the school-room.

This was pretty good for the first day at school, for there could be no doubt but that he had made a hit in more senses than one, and had become the leader of the school.

At recitation that afternoon he showed that he could learn as well as fight, and became a favorite with Professor Backstrap, who believed that he should have cause to be proud of the boy that his wealthy patron had taken an interest in and confided to his care.

This, however, was before the old man had discovered Bill Cortland's black eyes and swollen proboscis, which, of course, attracted his attention.

"Ha! vot vos dot? Master Cortland, stand up!" he called, at which a titter ran through the school-room. "Stand up, I say!"

Blushing, reluctant, and indignant, Bill arose slowly to his feet.

"How vos dot? How come you by dot pair of peantiful eyes und dot nose?"

This was a worse dose, if possible, than he had swallowed before, and he hesitated.

"Have you been fighting, sir?"

"Yes, sir."

"Who did you fight mit?"

"Bob Rollick!" replied Bill, sheepishly.

"Ah! vot vos dot?" exclaimed the old man, looking towards Bob's seat. "Stand up, Master Rollick; let's know about dot."

Bob arose calmly in his seat.

"Did you fight mit Master Cortland?"

"Yes, sir."

"Ah! what for you do dot?"

"Because he struck me first, sir."

"Ish dot so?"

"The boys all saw it, sir."

The expression on every face, and the nods, were enough to convince the professor that Bob had told the truth.

"So—so! you licks efery boy in school but one, hey? Dot serves you chust right. Bime-by, puddy soon, you fint some boy dot knock your nose out und gife you some bloody eyes, hey? I guess I hear me nod so much aboud you after this, und how you poss all der poys. So—so! dot ish goot, but I makes me der stuf-fin' oud of you both if I catch you at some more of dem fights. Sit down."

But there was no danger of Bill's coming after any more. He had been a bully, but he was no hog. He knew when he had enough of anything.

And so the first day's schooling ended, and the boys were dismissed to their sports an hour or two before it was time for supper and the close of the day.

They all assembled on the play-ground with the exception of Bill Cortland, who retired to his own room to nurse his wrath and swollen nose.

The boys flocked around their new leader, and made themselves acquainted with him personally, so that before half an hour had passed Bob knew them all by name, and found the majority of them to be good fellows, although this sort of school life was new to him.

But what pleased him more than all was the fact of his being given Joe Bimm for a roommate, for he found him to be just his style in everything, and that night they sat up without a light in the room a long time after the prescribed hour for retiring—nine o'clock—swapping stories of school life for those of a rougher life of an outcast upon the world of a great city.

And so a week passed. Bob was delighted, not only with his studies, but with his fellows, and he began to think that he had never known what life with happiness was before. He grew to become more and more a favorite with the scholars, and also with the professor, who regarded him as a smart, apt boy, who was all right if left unmolested.

Even Bill Cortland became partially reconciled to his dethronement, and as Bob held no ill will toward him, the whole school was gradually united, and all differences ceased, for Bob was a leader who took on no airs. He only wanted to enjoy fun and good friendship. At nearly all of their games he proved himself to be nearly as good as the best, and this gave him still another hold, to say nothing of the new things he was continually getting up for the general amusement.

Miss Gnarley visited him at the end of a fortnight, and was delighted with the report she received of him, while Bob understood the use of "taffy" well enough to apply it nicely. So she kissed him at parting, and gave him ten dollars for pocket-money.

It will be seen that Bob had fallen upon a pudding containing a nice assortment of plums, and he was just sensible enough to appreciate it.

It was now very warm weather, and such hours as they were out of school the boys spent in or on top of the water, having a good time and trying to keep cool.

And the hot weather affected Professor Backstrap pretty considerably, and so he made the noonings an hour longer, to be continued to the end of the term, so they could have the coolest part of the day in school, all of which pleased the boys hugely, of course.

And while they were out at their sports, or keeping cool under the trees, the old man would take a nap in the school-room after dinner, sitting in his easy-chair, so as to be on hand when the bell rang for school to reassemble.

This had been noticed by some of the boys, all of whom wished that some joke could be played upon him, although none of them dared to attempt it. But it remained for Bob Rollick and Joe Bimm to work it out.

All unbeknown to the others, they contrived how they should have some fun with his nibs, and went quietly at work about it.

It was one sultry afternoon, after Bob had been there about six weeks, and Backstrap seemed uncommonly drowsy; consequently he

was not long in falling asleep after a dinner that was washed down by several glasses of beer.

Seated in his easy-chair, he soon forgot the world and mischievous pupils, and was far away in the land of nod, discharging round after round of snores that would have frightened an army mule away.

Bob and Joe were waiting for him to get fast asleep, and when they thought he was so, they stole into the room in their stocking feet.

"Whew! what a bugle!" whispered Bob.

"What a bassoon!"

"Hush, now, don't even whisper," said Bob, stealing softly toward him on tip-toe.

Taking a paper fool's cap from under his jacket, he proceeded to place it gently upon his head, and this was so cleverly done that it did not change the volume of snoring in the least.

Then taking a nice piece of burnt cork, he began to touch up his face in a most comical way, after which they stole softly from the room, leaving the old man alone in his glory.

Without loss of time they joined some of the fellows in the play-ground, but kept their own counsel regarding what they had been doing.

"I say, Joe, he won't wake up until the bell rings, will he?" asked Bob.

"No, and sometimes he don't until we are all in the school-room. He appears to wake up a little at a time, and his nose music stops the same way."

"That's bully. Now we must contrive some way to get the boys all into the school-room by the time the bell begins to ring. I know how we'll do it. You go and say that it is time for the bell to ring—mind you, about a minute before it is time—and then I'll dare the whole gang to catch me on a run for the school-house, where we will bob up just as the janitor begins to ring the bell."

"All right, Bob," and Joe took out his watch and told the fellows that they would not have time to play another inning, for the bell would ring in just one minute.

"Let us go to the school-house," put in Bob. "I say, fellows, I'll tell you what I'll do; I'll give anybody tenpence that'll catch me before I reach the school-house steps."

"All right—go it!" cried several.

"Hold on, now, a fair start," said he, taking a position. "One, two, three!" and away he flew like a deerhound, keeping well ahead of them all, but not so far as to discourage them.

It was an animated run, and, as he had calculated upon, they reached the school-house just as the bell began to ring. Pausing a moment, the boys began to file into their seats.

There sat Professor Backstrap, not yet fully awakened by the ringing of the bell, with one of the most comical-looking mugs on that was ever seen.

The boys paused before him and sent up a loud shout, which brought him quickly to his feet, when some of them scattered to their seats, Bob and Joe among the rest.

"Vot vos dot foolishness dot you make! Go by yourn seats, or I make some chumping about dis blace," roared the old man, who, of course, could not see himself as others saw him.

"Stop dot laughing, school is in!"

But they could not stop to save themselves, and the old fellow became wildly mad; seizing his rattan, he rushed among them, and they scattered like sheep and sought their seats. They saw that somebody had played a joke on the professor, but who it was they of course knew nothing.

"Stop, I say!" he yelled, striking the desk in front of Frank Bloom, with a crack that made him leap to his feet. "Vot vos the meaning all this nonsense? Hafe you all gone grazy? I can't have some order here, I brake me so pones I bade you. Go on mit your studies, a don't let me some more of them grin see v you vos in school," said he, as he turned towards his desk.

Bob Rollick and Joe Bimm were two of the soberest of the lot, but there were others who could not keep from laughing entirely any more than they could fly.

This provoked Backstrap to a point beyond endurance, and seizing his rattan again, he

gave it a preliminary whirl about his head, and in doing so knocked off the fool's cap.

Louder than before did the boys laugh at him now, and madder than ever, if possible, became the irate professor; but just then he caught sight of his face in a looking-glass.

CHAPTER III.

FOR once Professor Backstrap was taken completely aback as he looked in the glass and saw the handiwork of the unknown artist, Bob Rollick.

If he whaled the whole school, as he at first thought of doing, he might not only punish a large number who were undoubtedly innocent, but be liable to offend several influential and wealthy patrons if they found out, as they certainly would, that he had punished their boys for the deeds of others.

And besides that, he knew that his strength was not equal to the task of going over the whole school, even if the boys did not rise against him as they had done before. So as he went to his desk he was sorely puzzled.

"Young chentlemens, dot vos a very nice

"Who vos der first one to enter der room?"

"I was, sir," said Joe Perkins.

"And we all came in together," added Tom King.

"Und you saw nopolyd?"

"We met Soggy, the gardener, coming from the school-room door," said he.

"Hal maype id vos dot son-of-a-gun!" he cried, as a sudden memory came to him regarding some trouble he had had with that individual not long before. "I smacks me his snood in two pieces for dot," he added, as though believing the story. "Now go on mit your stud-



Of course, having nothing but his nightgown on, that rattan fitted nicely, but after he had given him one or two swats with it, a cracker that had hung fire longer than the others, exploded, and the professor darted out of the room, thinking somebody had fired a pistol at him.

He could not blame his pupils for laughing at such a looking mug as his was, but, oh! wasn't he mad! whew!

For a moment he could not speak, and did nothing toward stopping the loud laughter and general uproar in the school-room. He seemed completely paralyzed with anger.

But finally, without speaking a word, he went to the wash-room, and proceeded to remove the clownish "make up" as far as he could do so with soap and water, leaving the scholars to take care of themselves meantime.

And no mistake about it, they did.

"Now, lads, look out for thunder and lightning," said Bob. "Mum is the word. Lay the whole thing to Soggy, the gardener. Say we saw him going out just as we come in."

"Yes—yes!" they all cried.

"Hush! Now all be good boys."

Acting on this order, each boy took some book or other from his desk and began to study, and when Backstrap returned to the school-room they were all looking as innocent as lambs, although several faces were yet red with laughing.

The old professor was at a loss how to act or what to do. Never before had he been called upon to decide in such a case, and he was puzzled.

trick, vosn't id? If dot poy ash did dot vill own der truth, I gife him fife dollar righd away."

"Yes, and take ten dollars' worth out of his hide," thought the boys.

"Und vot is more, I will nod flog him," he added.

"No, you'll just kill him," they thought to themselves, but no one made a move or a reply.

"But if dot poy own nod up about dot trick, I lay me for dot poy, und fint him oud, und don'd you dot forgotten, und you bade dot I dakes more skin off his pody ash would make him ten suits of clothes."

The boys smiled, but made no reply, and so little by little, the old fellow worked himself up to the boiling point again, and wanted to fight.

Glancing searchingly around, his eyes rested on the placid face of Bob Rollick.

"Master Rollick, stand up!"

Bob did as ordered, still looking calm and innocent.

"What you know aboud dot?"

"Nothing, sir."

"Have you any suspicions?"

"No, sir."

"Did you see any one in der room when I vos asleep?"

"No, sir, we were all down on the playground until a moment before the bell rang."

ies. I bade you dot I have no more of dot funny pizness puddy quick."

This settled the business for the time being, and curbing themselves the best they could, they proceeded with their studies, at the same time inwardly cogitating upon what would happen when Backstrap and Soggy met.

As for Backstrap, he was very glad that the thing had turned as it did, for he didn't wish the scholars to imagine for a moment that he believed they had placed this indignity upon him, and even if Soggy denied having done it, it would break the matter up in such a way as to enable him to crawl out of it without much disonor, and without running the risk of punishing innocent scholars.

But he was in no mood for trifling during the remaining hours of that afternoon, and woe betide the delinquent wight who did not have his lessons right.

At recess the boys all gathered around Bob to hear what he had to say, for nearly every one of them suspected that he either had something to do about the matter, or knew about it.

But Bob was too fly to give himself away, and so he pretended to be wholly ignorant of who the joker was, although admitting it to be a big thing. Yet de clung to the idea that Soggy was probably the man, and finally he

and three or four others went down into the garden where he was hoeing corn, and attempted to interview him.

Soggy was a Yorkshireman, a fellow who knew but little, and kept that little to himself, for fear of being left empty.

He had been the butt of the scholars for a long time, he taking everything in good part, and seemingly rather enjoying the fun as much as they did. In short, he thought it as much of a racket in which he was the victim as he would have had somebody else been the subject.

"Halloo, Soggy!" said Bob cheerily.

"Ah, lad, how war thee ther day?" he asked, straightening himself up from his work.

"Oh, bully! But I say, Soggy, what's the row between you and the old man?"

"Not meoch, only he say I war lazy-like, an' dinna do enough."

"He says he's going to bounce you."

"I dinna care a whut if he do, but I wunna lave him bully me."

"That's right. If he tries to pick a quarrel with you, show him that you are just as good a man as he is," said Bob, whispering to him.

"Dade I will, lad. There be not a lazy bone in me budy, an' I wunna ha' ony mon say so."

"Good for you, Soggy. Brace right up to him, and he'll think all the more of you."

At that moment the school bell rang, and the boys scampered away to their lessons, believing fully that they had got things a-going all right.

Meantime, while the scholars were out, the professor had been examining the fool's cap that had been placed upon his head, in the hope of finding something about it which might enable him to solve the problem of who had made or placed it there. But all to no purpose thus far, and as the scholars began to come into the room he placed it in his desk for future examination, although he was bound to have his quarrel out with Soggy.

The afternoon hours finally passed, and the school was dismissed for the day. Then the boys hovered around in groups to see what would be the upshot of the supposed difficulty between Backstrap and his gardener.

But they did not have to wait long before they saw him leave the school-room, and start for the field where Soggy was still at work, and without loss of time they ran around into a grove which enabled them to approach quite near without being seen by either.

Backstrap approached the Yorkshireman with bold and determined strides, and the nearer he came to him the madder he became.

"Shoggy, you ish von tam scoundrel, sir!" was his first salutation, as he shook his fist at him; "und I hafe come here to preak efery bone in yourn ugly pody."

"Weel, mon, if thee thinks it will mak' me do more work, why broken 'em if 'e wull," said Soggy, resting on his hoe-handle.

"You ish von tam scoundrel! you make some foolishins mit me, und I make you sick for id."

"Mon—mon, I dinna understand thee."

"Bud I understand you, py Jingo! und I make you eat some dirt," said he, approaching him in a very belligerent manner.

"Kep awa' fra me, mon!" said Soggy, supposing all the while that the old fellow was mad at him because he did not do work enough.

But before he had any further chance to inquire into the business, Backstrap's big right hand went out and hit him squarely on the nose, and this brought matters to a sore point at once.

Soggy was not much of a pugilist, but, like the majority of Yorkshiremen, he was heavy on the wrestle. The blow on the nose had aroused all the spunk there was in him, and while Backstrap was dancing around, trying to get in another, Soggy was looking for an opening for a clinch.

They pranced around in this way for quite a minute, neither saying a word, but both bent on mischief, while the scholars were taking it all in as they peered through the hedge.

Presently, when Backstrap made a lunge, thinking he saw another chance for more fun with Soggy's nose, the Yorkshireman caught him around the waist, gave him the trip and a twist, and down he went, Soggy on top.

The boys could scarcely refrain from shouting their approval, such a neat fall was it, and the right man down.

But Backstrap was not inclined to rest as he was, and attempted to reach out while he lay on his back, for the purpose of knocking him over the top of a tall pine growing near, at the same time making use of broken English epithets enough to ruin a lager beer saloon.

Soggy, however, seized his arm to prevent the execution of his charitable intention, but in doing so, Backstrap got the turn on him, and being no slouch at that sort of business, Soggy went under.

Only for an instant, however, before he was again on top. And in this way the struggle went on for about five minutes, during which they rolled down and tore up about two square rods of young corn, sometimes one on top, sometimes the other.

But youth and wind were on the side of Soggy, and he got on top to stay, and feeling sure of his seat, he caught Backstrap by the two ears, and proceeded to bang his head down into the soft earth until it made his teeth chatter.

"Ho—ho—hold on!" he finally managed to exclaim, half suffocated with dirt.

"Wull ye let me alone, mon?" asked Soggy.

"Yes—yes; let me ub!"

"Wull ye say ye strock me fust?"

"Yes—yes—let me ub, I tell you!"

"Then got op wa yersel'," said Soggy, releasing him and springing to his feet.

"Got in Himmel!" the old man spit out, with a handful of dirt.

"But ye strock me first, mon alive."

"Oh, mine Got, dot vos too meoch!" said Backstrap, turning and walking away without offering any further comments or explanations.

The boys pounded each other, and rolled over on the ground in the excess of their desire.

But they did not find Professor Backstrap there at the head of the table, with his eye skirting up and down the line of boys on either side to see if any of them ate more than his share. No, the old fellow was in his room, washing, swearing, and applying court-plaster.

In fact, they did not see him again until school came in the next morning, so closely did he apply himself to the task of getting himself to look less like having got the worst of a rough and tumble with a grizzly bear, and as a natural consequence they enjoyed themselves to their fullest bent.

light. They could scarcely contain themselves, and just as soon as Backstrap was out of sight, they rushed over the hedge and flocked around Soggy with congratulations.

"I wonder if he thinks I can work fast enough to suit him now?" he asked, still laboring under the impression that the whole trouble was on account of Backstrap's dissatisfaction with the amount of work he did.

"Right you are, Soggy, old boy. You did it for him first-rate," said Bob Rollick, and they all joined with him to such an extravagant degree, that Soggy began to regard himself as a hero.

But where the laugh came in was, that neither Soggy nor Backstrap understood each other, and the row which the boys had brought about between them was simply food for their own laughter.

Without doubt, however, Soggy was the victor, whether he knew what the row was about or not, and Backstrap was fifty per cent. worse off than he was before he attempted to get revenge for a joke which the innocent gardener would never have dreamed of.

Just then the supper-bell rang, and with loud, joyous laughter, the boys scampered away, each with the stomach of an ostrich, which study, play, and laughter had given them.

But he did not dream that his scholars had witnessed his set-to with Soggy, or he would scarcely have had the cheek to talk so loud and do quite so much threatening.

However, he felt certain that he did not want any more to do with his gardener. He might discharge him at the end of the month, but he wouldn't attempt to chastise him again.

And so the matter dropped for the time; in

fact, for all the time, for Backstrap saw that the more ado he made about the matter, the deeper he got into it the way he didn't want to, and he finally took a big tumble and let the whole thing be forgotten if it could be.

Things went on again as usual at the school, which, of course, included lots of fun, and floggings to pay for it oftentimes, and whenever Backstrap got hold of a delinquent whom he suspected of knowing the least thing about the trick that was played on him, he just put in three or four extra cracks for his own personal satisfaction.

But as yet Bob Rollick escaped all such attentions on the part of the professor. In fact, he managed all the while to keep himself above suspicion, although the majority of his fellows knew him to be the leader in nearly all the mischief both in and out of school.

It was about this time that there was considerable talk all over the country about rowing, and it began to be indulged in to a greater extent than ever before, both in schools and colleges, and among the lovers of outdoor sports generally.

And, of course, the pupils of Professor Backstrap caught the fever as well. There were two-light row-boats in the creek near to the playground, owned by the professor and kept especially for the benefit of his scholars.

The boys formed themselves into crews, single, double, and four-oared, and had many a good and exciting time racing on the waters of the bay.

In all these sports Bob Rollick was a leader, as he was in everything else, but besides being the captain and stroke-oar for the victorious four-oared crew, he also managed to have lots of fun out of it.

For instance.

There was a fat fellow in school by the name of Frank Pearse. He was about sixteen years of age, four feet high, and weighed at least one hundred and fifty pounds.

On this account he could not belong to any of the crews, and could not row well enough to beat the smallest boy in school if he attempted a single scull race. But he was a loud talker; pretended that he knew quite as much about boating as the best oarsman living, and was forever in a wrangle with somebody regarding different things connected with boating.

He acknowledged, of course, that he was too fat to row himself, but he could teach others how to do the business, and he didn't want anybody to forget it.

Bob Rollick happened to think one day how he could have some fun with "Skinny" Pearse, as the boys used to call him, and so he put up a job with Bill Cortland and laid out how they would work it.

Bill was to challenge Bob for a single race of half a mile, when Bob was to go at least two better by offering to race with him that distance for ice-cream and cigarettes for every member of the boat clubs, and to have "Skinny" Pearse perched in the bow as his umpire, allowing him to pick the lightest boy in school for the office and position if he wished to.

This created quite a sensation, and no one was more pleased than "Skinny," particularly because he had been selected as umpire for Bob Rollick, and he talked loud and bet all his pocket money on the result.

"You are with me, aren't you, 'Skinny,' old boy?" asked Bob.

"Bet your last oar I am. Why, Bob, you can beat that rooster five boat lengths in half a mile," said he.

"I think so. At all events to-morrow will be Saturday and I shall try for it, you bet."

"Good. Wish I wasn't quite so heavy, but you can beat him all the time."

"Who has he selected for his umpire?"

"Frank Snyder. Why, the little runt don't weigh more than a loaf of bread. That shows he is afraid of you, and don't dare take a fellow of any weight," said Pearse, frothing at the mouth and getting red with the excitement he was under.

Well, that night Bob and Joe Binn completed the job after he had been out taking a little exercise with "Skinny" perched on the bow of his boat, and everything was arranged

for the race which was to come off the next afternoon.

This job called for about one hundred feet of line, about the size of a clothes-line, but the use to which they put it will be seen hereafter. At all events, it was put out of sight and lay concealed under the stern of the boat as she lay moored to the wharf where they were kept.

At the appointed time the whole school assembled on the little wharf to see the race. Arrangements had all been completed and agreed upon, and when the referee called for the contestants to get into their boats, "Skinny"

both pairs of oars caught the water at the same time.

Of course it was arranged that Cortland was not to pull his best, or he would have gone right away from Bob, with the bow of his boat settled down so far in the water. But Bob was to do his best, and he did.

Bending all his strength upon the oars, he forced the boat along at a rapid rate, even getting ahead of Bill, at which there was a shout, and "Skinny" yelled and waved his handkerchief enthusiastically.

But suddenly that clothes-line got in its little

—why didn't you look out for tricks?" asked Bob, as he rowed slowly back to the wharf.

"I never thought of such meanness. Oh, won't I warm some of those fellows! I'll bet it was Bill Cortland. Well, whoever it was, I have got beaten."

"And I have got a ducking. Ough! how wet it is in here!" he added.

By this time Bob had returned, so that "Skinny" could wade ashore, where he was received with a perfect hurricane of shouts and laughter.

And he turned upon them savagely, thinking,



"Let's hurry up," cried Joe, and, taking the fore legs and Bob the hind quarters, they struggled with his kicking for awhile, and after some hard work managed to get him up into the belfry.

Pearce stepped forward like a chicken to a dough-dish, ready to take his seat.

"Hold on, 'Skinny,' let me get in first, or you will drive her bow under water and send her stern up into the air," said Bob, getting in.

The laugh among the boys standing around made "Skinny" mad, and he offered to wager his jacket and hat against a second-hand postage-stamp that Bob Rollick would win the race.

"Oh, sit down and shut up! Who wants your clothes any way? There's no men in school," said one of the fellows on shore.

"You don't dare to bet."

"I'll bet you," said Dick Manson, coming forward from the crowd.

"What will you bet?"

"I'll bet half a dollar against your jacket and cap," said he, producing the money.

"All right; I'll do it."

"Well, pull off your duds—no nonsense."

And "Skinny," seeing no other way, pulled them off and handed them to a stakeholder.

"Now, then, are you ready?" demanded the referee, after everything was settled.

"All ready," they both replied, bracing themselves with their oars well in hand.

"One—two—three—go!" he shouted, and

work. One end of it had been fastened to a ring-bolt in the stern of the boat, and the other to the wharf, and when its full length had been attained the boat stopped suddenly.

Yes, very suddenly, and just as suddenly did "Skinny" Pearce turn a back somersault and go out of sight under water.

The shout that went up could have been heard for a mile away. The boys roared and yelled, and when he finally bobbed his head out of the water, puffing and half-frightened to death, he was greeted with laughter and derision, and all sorts of calls were sent out to him by those on shore.

Even Bill Cortland laughed so he could scarcely row, but he kept on and finished the race, while Bob, with great solicitation on his face, was assisting his umpire to get a hold of the stern of the boat so he could row or tow him ashore.

"They have played a trick on us, Bob," said he, as he saw the rope attached to the stern of the boat.

"I think so; but what is it?" asked Bob.

"Somebody has fastened a line to our stern and made it fast ashore, I guess."

"That was confounded mean. That makes us lose the race. You know all about boating

of course, that the leader of the school was with him, and never for an instant suspecting that he was the one who had put the job up on him.

And to make matters still worse, the stakeholder gave his coat and hat to Dick Manson, who bore them away in triumph, leaving him to walk back to the school-house, wet as he was mad, and disgusted to think that Bob Rollick would not pitch in and fight Bill Cortland and all the other fellows.

CHAPTER IV.

THE boat race racket was only one of the many which Bob Rollick was continually getting up at somebody's expense.

As for Skinny Pearce, he got laughed at so much by everybody that he finally began to suspect that the whole thing was a put-up job, and worked simply to make a victim of him. And he was right.

And he was also mad.

"Don't you believe a word of it, Skinny. The idea of my putting up a job on my own umpire! Why, the thing is absurd, cully," said Bob to him the next day.

"But it was a job, Bob," replied Pearce.

"Don't I know it?"

"But you don't kick much."

"Do you know why, Skinny?"

"No, I'll be hanged if I do!" he growled.

"Well, I'll tell you. It's because my head's level."

"But you generally kick if anybody plays a racket on you."

"Yes, when I know who it is that plays it; but in this case I don't know who it was. It was a good joke, only you happened to get the worst of it. Now if I kicked as much as you did, the boys would make as much fun of me as they do of you; but, don't you see, I join the laugh and whoop'er up, and then they don't care to rig me any more; and so long as you keep up the growl, so long will they keep up the laugh. And there is another thing, Skinny; you or I are just as fond of playing a racket on other fellows as anybody is; and if we catch it once in a while ourselves, the most sensible thing we can do is to laugh it off, and get square some other time."

"Do you really think so, Bob?"

"Of course I do. Now you join right in with the fellows the same as I do, and I'll bet the treats that they'll take a tumble, and let up on you."

"Well, if you say so, I'll do it, but I'd just like to punch somebody in the snoot first," said Skinny, shaking his head.

"Oh, put down your hands. Take a tumble and join in the laugh," said Bob.

"Oh, that's all very well for you to say. But you didn't get the worst of it."

"Didn't! Didn't I lose the race and have to pay?"

"But you didn't get wet as I did."

"But I had to 'wet' the other fellows down at the village, didn't I?"

"And I heard Tom King say that you didn't mind the cost so long as you had some fun with me."

"Oh, he be hanged! He was only trying to get you on a string."

"String! I think they had us both on a string," said Skinny, referring to the boat race.

"That's so. But the fellows keep it upon you just because they know it makes you mad. Now don't take any more notice of them and you will see how quick it will stop."

And in this way Bob Rollick threw off all suspicion that had attached itself to him, and although the boys still continued to laugh at and guy his fat friend, still after that nothing could have made him believe that Bob had anything to do with putting up the job to give him a ducking.

One of Bob's duties consisted in writing one letter a week to Miss Gnarley, his good friend and patron, in answer to a long one which she wrote to him, and this duty he took much pains in doing, for he was an appreciative young fellow, full of noble, generous impulses, and he did not fail to understand that the eccentric old maid was the best friend he had in the world, and that it was no more than right that he should humor her whims and wishes.

And she was so much in love with the handsome youngster that there is no knowing what she might not have done had he been a few years older. But it is said that old maids never cease to hope, and perhaps, after all, she had future designs on Bob, although she was acting the part of a good mother and guardian now, and his being without friends or relations in the world, so far as he knew, it is not to be wondered at that he clung to Miss Gnarley with honest feelings.

And, in spite of his natural bent for mischief, he got on first-rate with his studies, soon standing first in his class, as he did everywhere else, one position making him a favorite with Professor Backstrap, and the other a favorite with his fellows.

He had now been a pupil in Professor Backstrap's boarding-school at College Point for nearly three months, which brought the Fourth of July near at hand, that day of all days that Young America delights in, and the question of what they should do in the line of celebrating the day began to be agitated among the elder scholars of the school.

I have mentioned before that a large number

of the boys were given entirely over to the severe old professor by their parents, the only stipulation being that they should be treated well, but kept for the most part at school, because of their being so full of mischief at home. With the exception of one short vacation in midsummer and one week during the Christmas holidays, the boys were to be kept under discipline at school until such time as they were fitted for some higher academy, where their fund of deviltry would be sure to be curbed by a sterner hand.

And there is many a boy who is sent away to boarding-school for the same reason, although they may not be aware of it at the time. They are either too fresh or too full of mischief at home and in the regular schools, and parents think that a boarding-school (that is, those of them who have never been there themselves when boys) is the best place to break them to harness.

So it will be seen that the general feeling among the scholars was that they would have to remain at College Point over the Fourth of July holiday, and if they had any fun they would be obliged to provide it themselves, while perhaps their parents were enjoying it in fine style somewhere else.

Bob Rollick, in one of his letters to Miss Gnarley, mentioned this fact, but said that nothing had been decided upon yet, and what they should do on the glorious day he did not know.

In her reply she told him to be very careful and not get hurt, but by all means to celebrate, as all American boys should do, and to show that she meant what she said, she sent him a large box of fireworks, and twenty dollars to spend as he saw fit.

Bob read this letter to his room-mate and chum, Joe Bimm, as he did the most of her letters, for there were few if any secrets between them, and Joe just whooped up lustily for the old girl.

"There is no use in talking, Bob, she is dead stuck on you," said he.

"Joe, she's a good one, and don't forget it."

"As you will not."

"You bet. She may be whimsical and cranky sometimes, and she isn't the handsomest woman I ever saw, but she's a good one," said Bob, and he really meant it.

"Right you are, Bob. Why, I'll bet my dad don't do half so well by me as she has done by you, and he's my father, and got barrels of money, and this old gal's no relation of yours."

"Oh, yes, she is. You forget."

"What?"

"She is my adopted aunt, and I address her as 'dear aunty' every time I write to her."

"That's all right. I don't see how you could object to that, seeing as how you have got no other relations that you know of. If I was you I should certainly think I had struck a pudding chuck full of plums."

"That's so, Joe, and here are some of them," said he, holding up the four five-dollar bills.

"Right every time, Bob."

"Besides, look at this big box of fireworks. Why, she has sent three sizes of fire-crackers; Roman candles, pin-wheels, rockets, and the Lord knows what else, and—halloo, what's this?" he asked, taking a letter from the packages of cannon crackers. "Why, it's a letter from the old gal."

"Read it, Bob."

Bob opened it and read as follows:

"NEW YORK, June 28.

"DEAR ROBERT:—I trust you will have a splendid time with these fireworks on the Fourth, but please be very careful, Robert, for if anything should happen to you, I should blame myself, you do not know how much, for sending them to you. Write me a letter on the fifth, and tell me all about what you did and how you enjoyed yourself."

"From your loving

"AUNT SOPHIA."

"Bully for her nibs!" cried Joe, after hearing it.

"Nice old gal! Oh, I'll be careful," said Bob, as he placed the letter in his trunk. "I'll hire some fellow who hasn't got any Aunt Sophia to do all the dangerous work. But don't say a

word to the boys about this box and we'll enjoy them ourselves and let them hear the noise."

"All right, but I guess all the fellows will get something to celebrate with, and if we all do as well as you have, we can have the biggest kind of celebration."

"But how about his nibs, Backstrap; will he kick against our having a hurrah?"

"I guess not, but we shall soon find out, for he is to give us our answer to-morrow."

"Well, if he won't let us have it here, we will take our snappers down to the village, and have a regular red hot time there."

"You bet."

The next day, after school, Professor Backstrap addressed them as follows, regarding a petition which the scholars had addressed to him, asking permission to celebrate on the school grounds, as well as to have the use of the boats for several races which had already been agreed upon:

"Young chentlemen, you have been very good boys already sometimes back, und you may have all de fun dot efer vos on dot Four of Chuly, und I raise dot American flag on de top of de school-house py de pole up."

The boys applauded him handsomely, and were ready to swear that he wasn't such a bad old rooster, after all.

"Now, then, fellows, let's see what we shall do on the Fourth," said Bob, after school was out, and the boys gathered around him.

"First there's the boat races," said Skinny Pearse.

"Oh, you're too fresh," suggested some one.

"I'll bust you in the snoot if you say I am too fresh," said the fat boy, approaching the other, with doubled-up fists.

"No, you won't; you aren't game, old freshy."

"I aren't, eh?" and he started to go for him.

"Here, you fellows are too sooner altogether," said Bob. "If you are bound to fight, go down by the river and have it out, but it's nothing to do with what we are talking about."

"No; dry up, the two of you," said Bill Cortaland.

"Yes; and you, Skinny, you are always kicking up a muss with somebody," growled Tom Marston.

"You shut up! What business had he to tell me I was too fresh?" demanded Pearse, savagely.

"But you are. You think there's nothing in the world but boating."

"That's so. I'll bet if anybody should die that Skinny Pearse would propose to celebrate the funeral rites with a boat-race," said Joe Bimm, and the laugh that this awakened completely squelched him.

"Now to business," said Bob.

"Yes—yes. Shut up, you duffers."

"I say, let's have a regular good time, such as we have at home in New York. If we can get a cannon we will fire a regular salute on the playground at sunrise, and fill in with fire-crackers. Then, while it is cool, we'll have the boat-races; fire another salute at noon; more cracklers and pops; then we'll have some game or some fun somehow; then at sunset we'll get off another salute, same as they do in the city, after which we'll have a grand wind-up with fireworks."

"Hi—hi! Bully!" they all cried.

"Bully? I don't see it," growled Skinny Pearse.

"Why not?"

"Where are you going to get the fireworks?"

"Well, never mind, Skinny, we'll have the boat-races, and that's all you want," said Joe Bimm.

"Now," said Bob, after the laughter had ceased, "let every fellow write home. Tell the folks all about what we're going to do, and ask them to chip in money or fireworks, so that we can be all ready."

"Yes; but what are we to do for a cannon?"

"Well, if we can't do any better, we will buy one. We can get a bully one for twenty-five dollars."

"Whew!" exclaimed Skinny.

"What's the matter with you?"

"Where are we going to get twenty-five dollars?"

"Oh, we won't ask you to chip in. You go and get on a raft, and have a boat-race all by yourself, and that won't cost you a penny," said Bob.

"It's all very well to talk, Bob Rollick; but I'll bet you can't raise money enough to buy a cannon that'll speak half so loud as you do."

"Dry up!" shouted a dozen voices.

But the boy was a natural "kicker"—never agreeing with anybody without a growl; and as to the matter of celebrating the Fourth of July, he went dead against doing anything except to have a boat-race, although probably when the

more fond of these holidays than are the Germans, and Backstrap was one.

There was but little sleep that night, for the boys kept firing crackers, and having all sorts of fun, preparatory for the glorious morrow.

And Skinny came in for a share of this preliminary sport, you may bet.

"Here is a bunch of big double-enders, that I think I will make Skinny a present of," said Bob Rollick, taking them from his box.

"Make him a present of?" asked Joe Bimm, looking at him in surprise.

time the crackers were exploding and darting around, filling the room with smoke and flashes of lurid flame.

If ever there was a little seven-by-nine hades, it was in that room during the next one or two minutes. But to make it even worse, several of the fellows, hearing the cry of fire, seized their water pitchers, broke in the door, and began to deluge them with water, wetting them and their bed completely.

This, of course, made them yell all the louder, if possible, and there is no knowing how far the thing might have gone had not



They placed him in a swing, and then telling him to hold on for his life, they began to give him such a swing as he never had before. Back and forth, higher and higher, until his shins touched the branches, which were at least twenty feet from the ground

time came he would not object to anybody treating him."

And he had quite a following among the smaller boys, and for the next few days made himself very unpopular by sneering and making fun of the proposed celebration. There is almost always such a fellow as this Pearse in a school, and what is more, he is most always a lubberly fat boy like him.

"I wonder if we can't make that Skinny sick some way? He's the meanest kicker I ever saw," said Joe Bimm, one night soon after.

"We'll see," was Bob's quiet reply.

The parents of the boys began to respond quite liberally, and everything looked promising. They had no difficulty in raising money enough to buy quite a large cannon and sufficient powder to make it do all the barking required, and by Fourth of July eve everything was ready; every boy cocked and primed for a big hurrah.

By this time, however, Skinny and his party began to think it wasn't to be such a tame affair after all, and they tried to ring in; but the others wouldn't have it, which made him groutier and uglier than ever.

After school was over for the day, a greater license than usual was given the boys, for the holiday really began then, and no nationality is

"Yes, but I guess I will light them first," he replied, smiling.

"Bully!" and Joe laughed heartily at the idea.

"And I guess he will think that two Fourths have come at once," saying which he took off his shoes and stole softly out of the room.

Now, Skinny the kicker had a room just under the one occupied by Bob and Joe, and as there was an open transom over his door, and as he had gone to bed with his chum, disgusted and sneering, Bob thought he could cheer him up and make it pleasant for him with this bunch of big crackers.

Stealing down to his door, he lighted the connecting fuse of the bunch, and tossing it over the transom into the room, he darted back again up the stairs to his own, where Joe was waiting.

He had scarcely reached cover, however, before there was the confoundedest cracking, banging, and slamming down-stairs (every cracker being as loud as a musket almost), together with yells of fire, murder, and a terrible bullabaloo.

Skinny leaped up and began dancing on top of his bed, calling for Professor Backstrap, while his chum followed suit and did the high key yelling of fire and murder, during which

Professor Backstrap seized his rattan and rushed to the scene of the riot.

He struck right and left in the darkness, and there was a lively scampering for rooms.

Two or three of them got a taste of the bush before they managed to get out of the way, but, seizing one fellow (and it was Skinny himself), he warmed him smartly for an instant.

Of course, having nothing but his night-gown on, that rattan fitted nicely; but after he had given him one or two swaths with it, a cracker that had hung fire longer than the others exploded, and the professor darted out of the room, thinking somebody had fired a pistol at him.

"Ho—ho! you shoods me, hey?" he cried. "I bades you dot I make some spots knock out of dot poy. Bring a lighd!" he called.

Two or three boys on the same floor who had their night clothes on responded to this loud summons, and appeared with lighted candles.

Meanwhile Skinny was bellowing like a stuck hog.

Backstrap made a rush at him.

"Vot vos dem foolishins all der vile? Who shoot me mit der bistol?" he demanded.

"Nobody, sir; somebody threw a bunch of fire-crackers in over our door," said Hen Gates, Skinny's chum.

"Bud who shood me mid dot pistol?"
"Nobody, sir. It was one of the crackers."

"Ish dot so?"

"And when we yelled fire the fellows came in and drenched us with water," whined Skinny.

"Gott in Himmell who vos dot?" asked the professor, turning upon the others.

But of course none of them knew anything about it, and after making several inquiries for nothing, he gave them all a good threatening and retired, leaving Skinny and his chum wet, sore, and disconsolate.

As the old man left the building somebody in Bob Rollick's room dropped a cannon cracker so that it exploded just behind him, causing him to jump about ten feet, and to swear vigorously.

But of course he could not tell out of which darkened window the cracker came, and after shaking his fist upward at the building, he finally concluded that the best thing he could do was to get back to his own quarters.

And in various ways the fun was kept up nearly all night; but Skinny got the worst of it, and yelled loudly several times through the halls that he was prepared to kill the fellow who threw those big crackers into his room, and of course he got chaffed and guyed for his trouble, and occasionally a torpedo would explode near him, when he would withdraw to his wet bed and continue to growl.

But morning came, and Bob Rollick and a party started for the play-ground to fire the grand salute of the day at sunrise. The cannon proved to be a ripper, and its thunders awoke the neighborhood and reverberated far away on Long Island Sound.

The other boys dressed themselves as speedily as possible, and hurried forth with their crackers, so that in a short time there was noise enough being made to satisfy the most patriotic.

It more than satisfied Professor Backstrap, and he regretted that he had given them permission to celebrate the day after their own fashion.

The breakfast bell was the only think that put a stop to the racket that was being made, and then only for a short time.

Then came the boat races, and this part of the programme was witnessed by Professor Backstrap and a few of his friends, and it was worth seeing.

Skinny Pearse wasn't there to boss around as he usually was. He was sick over his last night's experience, and stood some distance away with his friends, growling and swearing what he would do to be even with the whole school.

The noon salute was fired, and as by this time the professor had got warmed up by sundry glasses of beer, which he had partaken of with his friends, he did not find so much fault with the noise that was made as he did before.

Then followed a game of base-ball and other sports, which, with bathing and a swimming match, filled in most of the time between that and sunset, when the final salute of the day was fired, after which the cannon was dragged to the barn and housed.

But what astonished the professor most in the evening was the amount of fireworks which were let off, and when he saw several people who lived in the neighborhood enjoying the display, he felt rather proud of it himself, notwithstanding those same fireworks gave him so much trouble the night before.

Finally the last cracker exploded, the last fire-ball shot from the last Roman candle, the last pin-wheel sputtered and whirled itself out in darkness, the last rocket came down a stick, and the day was over, and was only a memory.

The boys went to bed early that night, tired almost to death, and glad enough to go to sleep without playing any more tricks on anybody.

They had enjoyed fun enough for one day, and Professor Backstrap had enjoyed all the noise he cared for, and taking another swig of beer, he forgot himself and everything else in sleep.

of Professor Backstrap's school, broke bright and clear.

The boys were in no hurry to respond to the rising bell, not only because they were still tired and sleepy, but because they knew there was to be no school that day. Neither was the professor quite so yeasty as usual.

Breakfast was rather a solemn affair, for after any spell of excitement, there comes a corresponding reaction.

As before stated, there was no school on the fifth, and the boys were allowed to go where they liked, while those who had spent the day at home were on the way back again.

As for Professor Backstrap, he went to bed. Too much lager the day before made him feel sleepy, so the fellows had it all their own way.

The rackets they played on Skinny Pearse, the fat "kicker," will be remembered, and before noon he had licked two boys whom he suspected (and you bet they were smaller than he was, for he never suspected a big boy of doing anything to him) of playing the cracker prank on him, and afterwards got a good pummeling by another fellow, neither one of whom had the slightest thing to do with the business.

So it will be seen that they had all the fun they wanted—especially Skinny—and sort of wound up this two-day vacation.

But only a few of them felt like doing more than lying off on the greensward, and talking over the fun they had, or telling of other Fourths they had spent elsewhere.

So the day passed, and the next found them all at school again fresh and bright. Professor Backstrap made them a little speech when they had assembled, something as follows:

"I dinks me dot you hafe a good dime of dot Four Chuly, und I hope me dot you hafe all made some noise enough to last you until Gristmas. Now go mit your pooks."

It was rather dull during the next few days, for the weather was hot enough to fry a pig, and there seemed nothing else to do other than keep just as still and cool as possible under the circumstances.

This was no easy matter for the professor to do, for he was so fat that he could barely waddle, and the only sympathizer he had was "Skinny" Pearse.

Bob Rollick wrote a long letter to his "aunt," Sophia Gnarley, giving her a graphic and interesting account of the celebration they had had, dashing in just spice enough to give it a flavor of the comical, and the good old maid thought so much of it that she took pains to show to several of her literary friends, who laughed at and pronounced it first-rate.

But Bob had been out of mischief about as long as he could stand it without having a fit of sickness, and he began to be uneasy and to look around for something to do.

Of course he and Joe Bimm were heart and hand together, being chums, and as a natural consequence their heads were often united in mischief.

One day they happened to come across Professor Backstrap's pet lamb, that had escaped in some way from its inclosure, and they at once began to take stock in him to see what he was worth for fun.

It had undoubtedly been a lamb once upon a time, but it was so long ago that he had probably forgotten it, and had considered himself a sheep for two or three years, at least.

And yet Backstrap continued to make a pet of him, and to call him his "liddle lammie" whenever they chanced to meet, which was quite often, since he was about the only pet he had in the world, if we except our friend, Bob Rollick.

The sheep was exceedingly tame, and many a frolic the smaller boys had enjoyed with him, although latterly he had developed sledge hammer propensities, and seemed inclined to drive a spike into them with his head.

"I say, Joe, I think we can have some fun with that old piece of mutton," said Bob.

"Then, of course, you don't propose to eat him," replied Joe, laughing.

"Nixy, Joe. There wouldn't be much fun in that, surely. I doubt if there would be any for a lion. But I guess we can have some fun with him and not burst his skin."

"Nor get our own burst? You know he sometimes gets back on a fellow with his head."

"No. I wonder how much he weighs?"

"About seventy-five pounds, I guess. At all events, I have lifted him often."

"That's all right. Do you think we could carry him up into the belfry?"

"I guess so. Why?"

"I'll tell you presently, but the first thing to do is to tie him somehow, so we may know where to find him after bed time."

"Oh, he's always roaming around here, and we can catch him any time."

"Good enough. Now it's about dark. Let us go out here in the field and cut a bundle of grass."

"What for?"

"Oh, I'll show you. Come on."

Without asking any further questions, Joe followed his chum, and with their knives they soon had a good sized bundle of grass cut.

Taking a stout cord from his pocket, Bob rolled up the grass tightly and tied it, leaving a yard or so of the string unused.

By this time it was nearly dark, and the last bell had called the scholars in from their sports to be in their rooms ready when the bell struck nine, the legal hour for retiring.

Bob and Joe stole into the school-room door, and, with the assistance of a match or two and the moonlight, they managed to reach the belfry. Here they proceeded to tie the bundle of grass to the "clapper" of the bell, in such a way so as not to interfere with the regular ringing of it, leaving it hanging about a foot below the rim.

This accomplished, they waited in a clump of shrubbery near by for Soggy to strike the bell nine times for retiring, after which they stealthily went in search of the pet sheep.

They had no trouble in finding him, for he had taken a fall for the night under a tree, but he made some objection to being disturbed.

However, they coaxed and urged him along to the school-room door, and after a deal of shoving they got him up two flights of stairs, after which they rested for a few minutes, for up the flight that led to the belfry they would be obliged to carry him.

The worst part of it was that he would give forth an occasional bleat, which made them exceedingly nervous lest it should be overheard and they be discovered.

"Shut up, you lubber!" growled Joe, giving the sheep a slap across the snout.

"He wants to give us away to save his own mutton," whispered Bob.

"Let's hurry up!" cried Joe, and taking the fore legs and Bob the hind-quarters, they struggled with his kicking for a while, and after some hard work managed to get him into the belfry.

The worst part of the business was over with now—provided they didn't get caught—and as there was a blind inclosure to the belfry surrounding the bell, they knew that the sheep was in no danger of falling or jumping out; so they went down, shutting the trap-door after them, and stole in their stocking feet away up to their room, leaving the sheep alone in his glory.

But the probability is, that after nosing around for awhile, he quietly lay down and went to sleep, never dreaming of the part he was unconsciously to play in the future. At all events, nothing was heard from him that night, and Bob and Joe, after laughing over the affair for awhile, concluded to go to sleep, so as to be ready for whatever might turn up in the morning, it being now nearly ten o'clock.

Early the next morning there was a stroke of the school bell heard, although it was fully two hours before it should by rights have been agitated, and this continued at intervals until Soggy rang the rising bell. But he was too dull to notice it.

Professor Backstrap was up by this time, as he usually took a walk in the cool of the day, and hearing another stroke of the bell, he suspected at once that somebody was fooling with it.

But on going into the entry where the bell-rope hung, he saw nothing, and after looking about for some moments, he concluded that it

CHAPTER V.

THE morning following the Fourth of July, which had been so finely celebrated by the pupils

must have been the wind, and so started out for his walk.

He was gone only a little way, however, when the bell was struck again, this time louder than before, and he stopped and looked around.

"Gott in Himmel! somebody is foolin' mit dot pell, und somebody gets some foggins righd avay," said he, starting to return.

On his way he met Soggy, who was hanging about to ring the breakfast bell when it became time to do so, and he instantly suspected him of the trick.

"Shoggy, I preak me some pones in your

started for the dining-hall, where he was sure to be the first one in order to keep order.

The boys fled in with their bright faces, but they observed a cloud on the old man's face, which had the effect of keeping them rather quiet.

Bob and Joe noticed it as quickly as any of the others, but as they had heard the bell several times, they concluded that they knew better than the others did what made the old rooster look so cross.

The bell had ceased ringing, and Soggy had gone away about his business. All had been

"I shall fint oud about dot so soon as I hafe finished mine breakfast," said he, resuming eating.

Three times more did the bell toll before they had gotten through with their meal, and then at a signal they all arose and followed the professor to the school-house, some of them a trifle scared on account of the strange movements of the bell.

As they reached the door it struck again, and after seeing that there was nobody at the rope that hung in the entry, the professor paused,



Taking a final look as they started to go, the jokers winked and made up a half-a-dozen kinds of "snoots" at them, and although it made them laugh, yet they hurried from the room, firmly believing that all was not right with them.

"Pody bimeby puddy quick if I see some more of dem foolishins," said he, angrily.

"What art the matter, mon?" asked Soggy.

"Who ring dot pell all der dime?"

"Why, mon, I rings it, to be sure."

"What for you ring dot pell, I tole you?"

"It's moy duty, mon alive!"

"I bade you dot you vill hafe no place if I hear you ring dot pell some more dimes," said the old man, shaking his fist at him.

"Don't thee want me to ring it ony more?" asked Soggy, not understanding him.

"No; I discharge you if you do."

"All roight, mon, it's na pleasure fo' me ter pull ther bloody ould rope, so ring ut thyself," said he, turning to walk away.

"Holt on, I tole you! Ring dot bell for breakfast und stop dot foolishins," roared the professor, pulling out his watch and seeing that it was nearly time.

"Art crazy, mon? But now thee told me not ta ring ut, an' noo thee tells me to ring ut; I doon't unnerstan' thee."

"Ring dot pell, I tole you!" thundered Backstrap, and the confused Yorkshireman started to obey.

"Dot chap he knows so much as von yaller tog mit no tail all der dime," muttered he, as he

waited on and were foddering themselves, when that sheep probably concluded that he would go for that bunch of grass again, which had been slapped and banged around by the ringing of the bell.

So while all was still, save the rattle of knives and forks, the bell struck again.

Backstrap leaped to his feet angrily, and muttering something about the prospect of there being a "tead tam fool" within the next two minutes, he rushed wildly out of the dining-hall.

But Soggy was by this time away down in the garden at work, and he saw at once that it was impossible that he could have struck the bell; he stood a moment in a quandary, while most likely that innocent sheep was chewing his mouthful of grass.

Suspecting that some truant was doing it for a lark, he hurried back into the dining-room, and ran his eye up and down the table to see if any of the scholars were absent.

Not one, and he resumed his seat at the head of the table with an air of perplexity on his mug.

Presently the bell struck again.

"Do you hear dot?" he asked, and the boys all acknowledged that they did, and this gave him some satisfaction, for it convineed him that he was in his right senses.

turned a trifle whiter, and looked inquiringly around.

"What is it?" asked several of the boys.

"Dot vos queer," mused the professor. "Some of you go ub-stairs and see, vile I looks in dot school-room," he added, showing that he had much rather investigate there than up the pokey stairs leading to the belfry.

Bob Rollick swapped winks with three or four of the larger boys when the old fellow left them and went into the school-room, and they went up-stairs and took a look, but of course saw nothing.

"Something awful's going to happen," said Skinny Pearse, under his breath, and so much weight did his words have that full half of the boys left the entry.

"Demivos such queer dings," said the professor, when the boys reported that they could find no cause for the ringing, and when the bell just then struck again, he grew even whiter, and manifested a disposition to retire and let the ghost or whatever it was have it all its own way.

"Keep it up!" whispered Bob, artfully, "and we shall get a half holiday at least," and some of the fellows tumbled instantly.

"Der vind could not ring dot pell," mused the old man, holding up his hand and glancing around.

"There is no wind, sir; but here comes Soggy."

"Ah! I makes him find out about dot," muttered Backstrap, brightening up.

By this time there was much excitement manifested among the scholars. A few thought it was some sort of a joke by somebody, while others regarded it as supernatural, and the work of a goblin or something.

"Shoggy, vot vos dot?" asked Backstrap, the man coming up just as the bell struck again.

"Ther bell, mon," replied Soggy.

"Who ring dot pell?" he demanded, angrily.

"I ring the bell."

"Who ring dot pell now?"

"I'm going to ring it now," replied Soggy, calmly.

"No—no," said Bob; "he wishes to know what it is that makes the bell toll every now and then," and the boys gathered anxiously around him.

Soggy listened until it struck again, and then, without manifesting the slightest fear, started up towards the belfry, while the professor and his pupils stood in the entry, anxiously awaiting his return.

Presently they heard the noise of a scuffle up in the belfry, and Soggy shouting to something to "whoa!" and keep still, which of course made the excitement all the greater, although no one ventured to go up to the assistance of the stalwart hired man.

But presently they heard him coming down the stairs leading to the entry where they were assembled, and while a portion of the boys ran away, Bob Rollick opened the door, and down came Soggy, carrying the professor's pet sheep in his arms.

"It wor the sheep," said he, dropping him upon the floor, when out he ran, as though glad to escape.

"The sheep!" they all exclaimed.

"Gott in Himmel! how vos dot?" demanded the professor, becoming suddenly bold.

"He wor nibblin' at grass tied to ther clapper o' yer bell, mon," replied Soggy.

The old man thought a moment, and then gazed around at his pupils.

That sheep and that grass never got up into the belfry alone; and without speaking a word, he proceeded up there to investigate.

There hung the partially eaten bundle of grass, and there were other evidences of his pet's having stayed there all night, at least, and then he understood that some of the boys had undoubtedly placed him there just to have a lark. Then he was mad, and returned to the school-room where the boys were assembled, laughing over the comical episode.

"Silence!" shouted the professor, rapping savagely with his ruler upon the desk; and instantly the boys became mute and attentive, none more so than Bob Rollick and Joe Bimm.

"Who make dot funny pizness mit dot pell und my sheep?" he demanded, in thunder tones.

But of course no one answered, and not one of them cowered as he glowered around upon them.

"Of course—nobody knows!" he sneered; "but I bade you dot I find out if id' cost me a million of dollars; I vill ged me some tetectives from der cidy und exbet dot poys und der Stade's brison, und don'd you make some mistakes aboud it."

And he pounded his desk with his ruler again as he spoke, or at least he intended to do so, but hit an inkstand instead, smashing it into fifty pieces and splashing the ink all over his white pants and vest.

Then there wasn't a boy in that room who would not willingly have given fifty dollars for a good laugh, but they all knew that it would have been little short of six months in the hospital to have done so, and so they fastened their eyes upon their books and choked down their feelings.

At recess they talked and laughed while the professor chalked the ink spots on his clothing, and swore in German.

All hands acknowledged that it was one of the hugest rackets that had ever been played at the school, and the inquiry on all sides—Bob and Joe among the rest—was who had worked it so successfully? But of course it was not given

away, for what is everybody's secret is nobody's, and Bob knew it.

A week passed by, but the detectives which Backstrap had threatened them with put in no appearance, and the thing began to be forgotten, although, to tell the truth, the professor had often laughed to himself when thinking of the joke, after his first anger had died out. But after all, whenever a fellow fell under his displeasure, and he went to work to dust his pantaloons, he put in two or three extra whacks, hoping he had got the one who had something to do with the sheep racket.

But everything was moving smoothly again, and not more than two fellows a day got "warmed" over the professor's stool of repentance, or just enough to keep up a spirit of hatred toward him, and if there was anything he did love to do it was to punish any boy caught breaking a rule of the school.

Still Bob Rollick escaped, and not only that, was regarded as a model scholar by the old man, although Joe Bimm frequently came in for one of the regular "dressings," which made Bob quite as mad as it would had he received the flogging.

"Never mind, Joe," said Bob, one evening after his chum had got a basting, "I have got another racket to play on his nibs; got it all ready to work, and that will be a good salve for your smarts."

"I'd like to use his bloody old ruler on him for about an hour," growled Joe.

"Never mind, you'll have a good laugh at his expense to-morrow, for to-night I am going to work it."

"What is it, Bob?"

"You shall see, and then I'll explain it to you."

This satisfied Joe, and he went to sleep feeling much better.

But in order that the reader may understand what Bob was up to, it must be understood that Professor Backstrap had a big old fashioned chair that he sat in behind his desk, and he took great pride as well as much comfort in it.

Bob had made himself solid with a carpenter in the village, whom we'll call Mr. Screwjack, who bore no good will to Backstrap, and together they concocted a job to make another chair, exactly like his, only in such a way that it would fall all to pieces when he sat down in it.

Screwjack did all the repairs about the place, and as he would of course be sent for to mend the chair, all he would have to do was to return the old one (which he was to take away at night when he substituted the imitation), and nothing would ever be suspected about the existence of the counterfeit.

Everything was arranged, the chair was all finished, and both Screwjack and Bob had tried it several times; and the night on which Bob was speaking to Joe was the one agreed upon in which he was to take away the old chair and substitute the new one.

Screwjack carried out his part of the management to a dot, and the next morning, when Bob glanced at it as he entered the school-room, he could scarcely believe that the job had been carried out, and that the chair he saw behind the desk was not the original one. However, he concluded to wait and see.

Professor Backstrap came in, cross and surly as a dog with the fleas and a sore head, and the first thing he did was to yell at a couple of boys, who did not get to their seats as quickly as he thought they ought to.

"Go to your seats, you pigs! I bade you dot you hafe some pizness done mit dot ruler bime-by puddy soon," said he, shaking it at the school. "I nefer seen such a set of noisy brutes. Here! come oud here, Master Bimm; I dinks me dot a tog of der same hair will cure you 'boud dot vispering'" and going to the seat where Joe sat, he snaked him out and over the stool for some morning exercise.

"Oh—oh—oh!" cried the boys, at every blow he gave poor Joe, whereat he yanked two or three more of them out for a little more of the same sort.

"Now if any odder poys dinks dot he wants some of dis fun, led him say so!" said Backstrap, glaring at the others.

But no one suggested that a taste of that

ruler would be agreeable, and so, puffing and blowing, the old man retreated to his desk.

Being tired, he sat down more heavily than usual, when to pieces went the chair, and Backstrap went sprawling to the floor amid the wreck.

A general yell of surprise and delight accompanied the crash.

Frightened half out of his surly wits, Backstrap picked himself up and gazed at the wreck of his favorite chair.

CHAPTER VI.

If ever there was an astonished man in this world it was Professor Backstrap, as he got up from the ruins of the chair.

So nicely had it been made that every joint of it seemed to have come apart the moment he sat down in it, and yet so much did it look like the chair it had secretly been put in the place of by Screwjack, the carpenter, and Bob Rollick's friend, that he never for a moment suspected that it was not it, and had gone to pieces like the "Deacon's One-horse Shay"—all at once.

Bob Rollick caught Joe Bimm's eye as he looked toward him, and gave him a wink which convinced him that this was the racket he had spoken of the night before, and this caused him to forget the flogging he had just received. But how, in the name of goodness the thing had ever been brought about, he could not comprehend.

The whole school was laughing, nor did the astonished professor seem to notice it. He was too much occupied with the wreck of his chair, and wondering how it came about.

But, after contemplating it for a few moments, he began to pick up the pieces and to stow them away under his desk, muttering: "Dot vos some queer pizness aboud dot."

"Did you hurt you, sir?" asked Bob Rollick, standing up and looking greatly concerned.

"No; sit down. I vos all right, but dot beads all dings dot I efer hear of!" and then he rubbed the seat of his trousers, either to see if they were torn, or because it ached around there.

"Go on mit your studies. Such dings always habben in goot families," he added, and this to put a pleasant face upon the matter, showing that he never suspected that a trick had been played on him.

But he had an absent, far-away look in his eyes all the forenoon which showed that he was thinking and speculating upon the matter. And it is no wonder that he did so, for in all respects it was one of the neatest and most successful tricks that had ever been played at school, or anywhere else for that matter, to say nothing of the mystery that surrounded it.

Why a chair that he had sat upon so long, and which always seemed to be as solid as a butcher's block, why it should give out in such a way on this particular occasion was more than he could understand, and it is no wonder that it kept him thinking; but after all he never suspected a trick. Who would?

At recess and during the noon hour the boys laughed and commented upon the matter, delighted at the accident that had befallen the old man, but never suspecting that there was a job in the business, or that handsome, honest-looking Bob Rollick was the fellow that worked it.

Bob and Joe Bimm knew it, however, and that night they laughed over it to their heart's content, Bob giving him the full particulars of how it was done.

"I say, Joe, didn't it take the smart out from under the seat of your pants when you saw him go down?" asked Bob, while they were laughing over the matter.

"Bob, it was better than soothing syrup and arnica," replied Joe, laughing.

"I thought as much."

"But I say, Bob?"

"Well?"

"How is the thing going to end?"

"In a laugh, of course."

"I mean when he comes to get the chair fixed."

"Oh, that's all fixed. Of course he will send for Screwjack to fix the chair, and he will ex-

plain all about it in some way, and take the chair to fix. Well, all he will do is to take the pieces of the trick chair to his shop, stow them away, and bring back the old chair, which, of course, is as solid as a rock."

"Good! and he will think the carpenter only fixed it again."

"All the time, sure!"

"It's the boss racket, Bob, if it only works clear through as good as it has done."

"Well, we shall see. Bill Screwjack is one of the boys himself, and likes a racket just as well as he used to when he was a boy. We are

"You know 'boud dot chair of mine?"

"The one behind your desk? Yes."

"So. Yesterday morning right away I set me down in dot chair like anydings all der vile, und bimeby, shust so quick as a hen scratch her ear, it go all to some smash."

"Is it possible?"

"Now, how vos dot, hey?"

"Well, really, I cannot tell without seeing the pieces," replied the carpenter.

"Come mit me und I show you all aboud dot," said Backstrap, leading the way to the schoolroom.

penter's face as he picked up the pieces of the chair to take away, and he wished that he had been one of the scholars of Professor Backstrap's school; that he might have been there to see the sport. He had been full of it when a boy at school himself, and that was why he took such a liking to Bob Rollick. He had been something like him himself when of his age, and as he remembered the fun he had, he heartily wished himself a boy again.

Professor Backstrap rested himself on the top of an ordinary stool that day; on his "stool of repentance," in fact, so that when any unlucky



When Soggy saw the horse he was utterly amazed, and tried to catch him to see what he was chasing at such a furious rate, but he could not do it. But just as he was about to give up trying to catch him, Professor Backstrap came upon the scene, and stopped in amazement at beholding the antics of his thoroughbred.

bully friends, and I'll risk him to work his part, and I'll bet he comes in a good winner."

"He has worked it so far first-class."

"Don't forget it, Joe."

After laughing and talking over the matter they finally went to sleep, each with a grin on his face as big as a pocket-handkerchief.

Professor Backstrap puzzled himself to sleep that night over the mystery surrounding that trick chair. He had sent word to Screwjack the night before to come the next morning and take the chair away; and being a prompt man of business, as well as a smooth-faced, practical joker, he was early on hand to do business.

Owing to being kept awake late the night before, the professor did not rise very early, and so Bob had a chance to see his friend, the carpenter, before the old man did. And in a few words he told him all about how nicely the racket had worked, and what fun they had had.

But Backstrap soon came out for his regular morning walk, and, seeing the carpenter, he at once closed with him:

"Ah! Mr. Screwjack, dere vos some puddy funny dings come mit me at dot school," said he.

"Indeed! What has happened?" asked Screwjack, looking as honest as a sheep.

Once there, the wreck of that chair was brought out from under the desk.

Screwjack examined them with a well-feigned curiosity, while Backstrap stood by.

"Now, how vos dot?"

"Well, you have probably read Dr. Holmes' poem, 'The Deacon's One-Horse Shay,' eh?"

"Yaw; I read me dot plenty times."

"Well, this chair is like the shay. It has worn well and long, but finally it all gave out together, and down it came."

"Yaw, I dinks me dot is so," mused the old man, involuntarily rubbing the seat of his trousers.

"The glue in the joints has decayed, leaving them as clean as when made, twenty years ago."

"Is dot so?"

"Yes, sir; that is the true explanation. Did you hurt yourself when you fell?"

The professor grunted and turned away.

"Take dot pieces avay mit you und make it ash goot ash new, hey?"

"Oh, certainly. I can do that."

"Dot vos all right," and the old man started from the room to begin his morning walk.

A full-grown grin stole over the young car-

fellow came in for a "warming," he had to take the stool out from behind his desk.

Two or three of them took a piece of it in this fashion.

That night, however, the carpenter returned the old chair, just as it was when he took it away, and Backstrap was delighted.

"Dot vos all right some more," said he, trying it severely with his full weight in several ways. "Py chimminy, but dot beats all vot I know. I vonder me how long dot last before it break some more?"

"Oh, it will probably last as long as you do."

"Dot vos goot enough; dot vos all I wants mid id;" and the expression on the old man's face showed that he was entirely satisfied, and still unsuspecting.

Little by little it leaked out among the boys that the whole thing had been an ingeniously-worked racket, although they were left to form their own opinion as to who it was who worked it.

But by this time they all had come to believe that Bob Rollick knew a great deal more than he had talked about; that he was one of those downy jokers who never gave anything away; and so it was generally understood that he was

the duck who worked the racket with old Backstrap's chair.

But Bob wore his honors meekly, if, indeed, he wore them at all, for he simply laughed when any of the fellows suggested that he was the author of the trick, neither admitting nor denying it.

Well, things moved along in Professor Backstrap's school about as usual. There was the usual amount of study, the usual amount of mischief, and about the usual amount of flogging going on from day to day, during which Bob Rollick was lying low, and making good progress in his studies.

He indulged in all the out-of-door sports, and still maintained his position as leader of the school without anybody to dispute his title. Miss Gnarley made frequent visits to him, and wrote at least two letters a week, which he was careful to answer.

But if she at first took a fancy to him, what would she be apt to do now, when he had grown to be much better-looking and refined, and as fine a specimen of an American schoolboy as ever was seen?

Why, she simply doted on him.

I have mentioned before that there was a general opinion among the scholars that Bob either worked or knew something about the chair racket, but they were all very careful not to mention their suspicions in such a way as ever to reach the ears of Professor Backstrap, for they all liked him too well, with the exception of the fat boy, Skinny Pearse.

This chronic growler was jealous of Bob's popularity, and in addition to that he had not forgotten the boat-race racket, in which he got a ducking in the salt water because of his freshness, and he felt certain that the job was put up by Bob Rollick and Bill Cortland, neither of whom he could handle, except with his spiteful tongue, and then behind their backs.

Of course he knew no more about it than the others did, but he told his suspicions to several people outside of the school, and in time it came back to Bob's ears.

"I say, Skinny," said Bob to him one day, "don't you think you have a handsome nose?"

"Well, I don't know. Do you think so?" asked the fat growler, unsuspectingly.

"Yes, it is a very handsome nose. But let me give you a bit of advice regarding it. I want to tell you how to keep it looking well. Just keep that tongue of yours between your teeth regarding me, for if you don't, I shall proceed to knock the beauty all out of it, and perhaps damage something else. Tumble?"

"I don't know what you mean, Bob."

"Yes, you do. You have been telling down to the village that I had something to do with Backtrap's chair going to pieces, and if I hear anything more I shall just paste you in the snoot. That's all," and turning away he joined his comrades on the play-ground, leaving the astonished Skinny looking after him, red in the face.

But he tumbled. He knew what he had said, and was surprised to know that it had got back to the school again without having reached the professor's ears, as he hoped it would when he told it, so he resolved to be more careful in the future.

It was about this time that a new boy came to the professor's school. He was about sixteen years of age, and had the appearance of being delicate and sickly.

Skinny was red hot for "hazing" him, for his instincts were brutal, although he hadn't the courage to back them up in a square fight, or at least with any one more than half his size.

He talked with several of the boys about putting the new scholar through a course of sprouts, and they even went so far as to propose several tricks they should play upon him after he had gone to bed.

Some of the boys thought favorably of it, but of course Bob Rollick had to be consulted, seeing that he was the leader of the school. Bob said he would think the matter over, and he went right to work doing it.

He got five or six of the boss boys into his room that night, and said to them:

"Fellows, what do you think about hazing that new boy?"

"He don't look as though he could stand it," suggested Joe Bimm.

"He looks as though cod-liver oil would do him more good than a hazing would," said Tom King.

"What do you think of it, Bob?" asked Bill Cortland.

"Well, I'll tell you what I think. 'Skinny' Pearse has shown himself awfully fresh about it, as he has in several other things, and my opinion is that he could stand a hazing much better than the new fellow," replied Bob, at which there was a laugh.

"That's so," they all agreed.

"Now what do you say to this? He is trying to get the boys to help him put the fellow through; suppose we make him believe that we agree to it, and then, instead of going for the new fellow, just turn on 'Skinny,' and give him the very dose he proposed for him."

"Bully!" they all exclaimed.

"All right. We'll give it to him to-morrow night. Make him believe that we are going to carry out his ideas, and you may bet that he will make sure to go to bed early to avoid suspicion. So after he has got his night-shirt on, we will go for him, all the while talking just as though we thought he was George Harding, the new boy."

"Oh, that will be bully."

"And oh, won't we give it to him!"

"Yes, and we will carry out his proposition about the pump and everything," added Bob.

"Yes—yes!"

"Now, mum, you know, only tell him that we are going to put the new boy through just as he wishes him."

They all shook hands and separated for the night, retiring to their individual rooms in high glee.

Bob Rollick generally measured people pretty nearly correct, and he was right when he said that Skinny would go to bed just about the time he thought the hazing would commence, for although he liked to see the fun go on, he was always the first one to make a show of having nothing to do with it.

During the day the details of the affair were all perfected, and Skinny appeared just as fresh as ever at making suggestions about how the new boy should be put through. In fact, what he laid out for their night's amusement would surely have killed the poor devil for whom he intended it.

Night came, and, as before stated, Skinny went early into his night-gown, but kept his door, window, eyes and ears open to take in the fun when it should commence.

It was about to commence right away.

Eight of the boys, slightly disguised, made a move soon after the retiring bell rang.

They moved toward Skinny Pearse's room. Bob Rollick was at the head of them.

"Ah, here he is!" shouted three or four of them, as they rushed into the room.

"Harding, we want you!" said Bob Rollick, in an assumed voice.

"Come along, Harding, we want to show you something!" said another.

"Pull him out!"

"Hold on, fellows—hold on!" cried Skinny, as they seized and pulled him out of bed.

"Yank him!"

"Hold on, I say! I—I aren't Harding; I'm Frank Pearse—I—"

"Too thin, old man—too thin! Come on!"

And they dragged him from the room.

To stop his yells they tied a handkerchief over his mouth, and then hurried him out of the building.

In vain he kicked and protested as well as he could by grunts and kicks. The boys insisted upon it that he was Harding, the new scholar, and hurried him toward the playground.

Arriving there, they placed him in a swing, and then telling him to hold on for his life, they began to give him such a swing as he never had before. Back and forth, higher and higher, until his shins touched the branches, which were at least twenty feet from the ground.

This they kept up for some time, when they stopped it, and took him out.

"Well, Harding, old man, how do you like our scupp?" they asked, and the poor fellow

tried his best to make them understand that he was not Harding at all, but they would not have it.

Then they made him run with them around the outskirts of the playground, two of them pulling him by either hand, and others behind with switches, the very thing he had suggested for Harding.

This done, they gave him some jalape whisky, to keep him from getting cold, they said, after which they walked him to the big wooden pump, where they placed him in the trough.

Two of them held him, while the others made that old pump-handle go as though it had been one of the brakes of an engine, and they were working to put out a fire on the premises.

And, oh! how he did squirm and try to get away from that unwelcome bath!

But he was only receiving the very treatment that he had suggested for the sickly new boy. In fact, he must have known that fact, and the probability is that it did not make him feel any more happy or comfortable on that account.

They gave it to him good for about three minutes, and finally pulled him out upon his feet again.

"Now, Harding, old boy, you are no longer fresh; go back to your own room, but if you ever mention this hazing to old Backstrap, we will give it to you ten times worse than this. Do you promise?"

Skinny nodded assent with his shivering, for he was glad to get away anyhow.

"Then skoot!" cried several, and they applied their switches to his shins until he ran like a deer, fat as he was, toward the dormitory.

Laughing almost to bursting, the jokers started for their own rooms, it being an hour past their regulation bedtime, and they all succeeded in getting in without being found out.

But how about poor Skinny?

His night-shirt was wringing wet, and clung to his fat legs and body, and he smarted with the cuts he had received from the switches; indeed, he was knocked almost completely out of time.

Tearing the handkerchief from his mouth as he ran, he entered the building, puffing and grunting like a frightened hog.

The other boys heard him, and set up a laugh.

"Halloo, Harding! where have you been?" some one shouted at the other end of the hall.

"I say, Harding, what do you think of hazing?" asked another. But as the hall was dark, he could not see who was guying him, and was only able to judge by the sound of the voices.

"Oh, you fellows are durned smart, aren't you?" he called, between his chattering teeth.

"That's all right, Harding, old man," was all the satisfaction he got, as he started into his room, shut the door, and pulled the bed up against it.

Well, wasn't that a lark?

With the assistance of his sympathizing chum he managed to get out of his wet night-shirt, and to rub himself dry with a towel, but he had scarcely done so when something else demanded his immediate attention. In fact, there was little or no sleep for him during the remainder of that night, during which he had ample time to think over what a nice thing it is to take the medicine that a fellow designs for some one else.

He couldn't and wouldn't believe that the fellows had made a mistake, and really mistook him for that skinny fellow, Harding; it was impossible that they could have done so, and the only conclusion he could arrive at was that they had purposely put him through the very course of sprouts which he had designed and advocated for the new pupil.

He was mad enough to fly, of course, but did not dare to squeal for fear of the whole school, who would undoubtedly make it warmer for him than the weather was. But he swore to himself and his room-mate that he would be terribly revenged, if it took a whole lifetime to do it.

"Halloo, Skinny! Where were you last night?" asked Ben Woolley, as they met at breakfast time.

"Oh, you go to the deuce!" growled Skinny.

"Say, Skinny, why didn't you come out and help us put Harding through last night?" asked Bob Rollick, coming up a moment later.

"Yes, you are very fresh putting up jobs on fellows, but you never come to the front," said Bill Cortland.

"Oh, but you should have seen the racket we put him through!" suggested Joe Bimm.

"Yes; we gave him the whole dose, just as you suggested," added Bob.

"Now that's all right. You duffers have had your fun, now look out for me. It will be my

turn next, and don't you forget it," replied Skinny, savagely.

This they kept up, although it was too thin for Skinny to swallow, and in his terrible indignation he swore to get good and hunk with them all, notwithstanding he had promised to say nothing about it.

He looked dreadfully ugly at breakfast that morning, while all the other fellows were smiling and making comments for his benefit.

As for Harding, the new pupil, when he

nose," said Skinny, getting white with anger and clenching his fists.

"I say, Skinny, you ought to have been out to see the fun last night!" said a little fellow, by the name of Henry Field, dodging behind some other fellows, while a loud laugh greeted the defiance.

Skinny made a rush at him, but of course was not agile enough to catch him, while a dozen other fellows repeated the sentence, loudly.

Finally Skinny caught one of the smaller fellows, and was about to go for him, when



"Oh, won't I fix you fellows for this?" said he, standing up in the boat and shaking his fist at them. "Good-by, Skinny. Write us when you get to New York," called Bob Rollick. The tide bore him away, and all the consolation he got was the chorus of laughter from the swimmers.

turn next, and don't you forget it," replied Skinny, savagely.

"What! Why, what the deuce does he mean?" asked Bob, looking around at the fellows as though surprised.

"Give it up. What's the matter, Skinny?"

"Now that's all right. I'm no sucker, but you fellows want to look out for me, that's all," said he, turning and going into the breakfast room, followed by a loud laugh.

CHAPTER VII.

A SICKER-LOOKING fat boy was never seen than was Skinny Pearse the next morning after the hazing he had received at the hands of Bob Rollick and some other fellows; that is to say, after he had been made to swallow the very dose that he had put up for Harding, the sickly new scholar.

And it will be remembered that they had called him "Harding" all the while they were putting him through, making believe that they thought it was the new boy they were at.

They greeted him the next morning and kept up the guy, asking him where he was the night before, and why he had not joined them in put-

ting Harding through the course of sprouts, assuring him that they had a ripping good time, and that he missed a big thing in not being on hand.

"I say, Skinny, you ought to have seen us put Harding through last night," said Bob, at recess that day.

"Oh, you be hanged!" growled Skinny.

"What! mad because you wasn't there?" asked the handsome, smooth-faced guyer. "Well—well, sneaked out of the whole business for fear you would get caught, and now you're mad because you didn't have any of the fun. I say, fellows, Skinny is as mad as a wet cat because he wasn't out to see the fun last night," he added, turning to the boys who began to gather around them.

"Oh, you ought to have been there," said Bill Cortland. "We had bushels of fun."

"Now, fellows, that's all right. I can't lick Bob Rollick or Bill Cortland; but if any other fellow in this school says I ought to have been out to see the sport last night, I'll punch his

Professor Backstrap caught him, bringing him up with a round turn.

"Hold on aboud dot!" he demanded. "How vos dem fighdings?"

"The fellows are all plaguing me," whined Skinny.

"Vot aboud dey plague you?"

This was a sticker, for if he told the old man all about the racket in which he had been the victim, ten to one he would not join in the laugh against him—for he liked a joke when it was not played on himself—besides, he had given his word not to divulge what had taken place, and he knew if he did so that he would be sure to get a worse dose than he had already received. So he hung his head, and made no particular reply.

"I don't like to see a poy so pig as you make some fools mit himself. Go in mit your seat," he added, and as he followed him toward the school-room, the boys laughed merrily.

Everybody appeared to be satisfied with the joke but Skinny Pearse; but as he had very good reasons for not being, he ground his teeth and took a terrible oath to have a terrible revenge.

And he afterwards did knock three or four of

the smaller boys on the nose, but they immediately combined and paid him back again in his own coin, so that he finally concluded the best thing he could do was to let the matter drop, and try to get back again into the good graces of his fellows.

So things went on again in the usual way. There was a plenty of hard study mixed up with the fun they had, for Professor Backstrap put the educational screws right to them, and there was no escape.

But Bob Rollick always managed to spice his part of the business with fun of some sort. And yet he learned very fast, and now stood at the head of his class, with a good prospect of going into the first class next term.

Miss Gnarley was delighted with her protégé, and did everything in the world for him. In fact, there wasn't a boy in school that was so well dressed, or that had so much spending money as Bob Rollick did.

They had a little fun with Soggy, the gardener, one day, and Bob, as usual, put up the job. It was Saturday afternoon, and so very hot that there was no comfort anywhere out of the shade, and but little in it. Soggy was up in a tall cherry tree gathering cherries.

The boys had often wished they could get at these big, dark red beauties, but the tree was too tall to climb, and besides, Professor Backstrap was bound to keep them for his own particular tooth.

Bob Rollick and the other boys were lying off in the shade near the playground, when they saw Soggy going for the tree with a tall ladder.

"Now, fellows, what do you say to having some of those boss ox-hearts?" asked Bob.

"Yum—yum—yum!" they all said, in chorus.

"But how are we to get them? Old Backstrap watches them so closely that he gets mad if he sees a robin in the tree," said Bill King.

"But he has gone to the village this afternoon, and I think I know a way to get as many as we want to eat," replied Bob.

"How?" they all asked, eagerly.

"I'll tell you. Some fellow go up and get a sheet off his bed."

"I'll go," said Harry Field, promptly.

"All right; hurry up, and then I'll show you the remainder of the racket."

The boys were all wondering what he intended doing with the sheet, and several of them asked him while Harry was gone; but he simply told them to wait and see.

Presently Harry returned with the sheet.

"Now, Harry and I, and Joe Bimm and Skinny Pearse will start the racket. You fellows remain here and see how we work it with Soggy, and then you can try it on, four or five at a time," said Bob, taking the sheet and starting with the fellows he had named for the tree, upon which Soggy had by this time been working long enough to pick the peck basket, which he had carried up, full.

Going to the ladder, they took it down from the tree.

"Ho, ho, lads, what art doing?" shouted Soggy.

"Halloo, Soggy! Are you up there?" shouted Bob, pretending to be greatly surprised.

"The course I been, an' thou'st ta'n doon the ladder, lad," said he, earnestly.

"Well, give us some cherries, and we will put it up again."

"But, lad, thee knoos these be the oold mun's favorites."

"So are we. Got a basket full?"

"Yea, lad."

"All right, throw them down into this sheet which we will hold to catch them, and then we will put the ladder up for you," said Bob, as he and the others took the corners of the sheet.

"But the oold mun!"

"Oh, he'll never miss them. Go ahead."

"Wilt put up the ladder, lad?"

"Of course we will."

"Un molest it na more!"

"We won't touch it again."

"Then I'll agree to thy terms, lad," said Soggy, and reaching out he tipped the basket, and a big shower or stream of luscious cherries poured into the firmly-held sheet, scarcely one being spilled.

"That's all right. Now up goes the ladder,"

said Bob, and with earnest tugs they put it up again, after which they carried their cherries down to the shade where the other fellows were awaiting them.

The thing was a grand success, and by the time they had got that lot eaten Soggy had another basketful picked, and Bill Cortland took the lead of the next expedition, although working it a little differently.

Going under the tree he shouted for Soggy to give him some cherries.

"Begone wi' ye, lad, I don now gi' ye boys a buskutful; begone wi' ye!" he replied.

"All right," replied Bill, and down came the ladder in the same way that Bob had taken it down. "Now will you give us some?"

"Lad—lad, what will the oold mun say?" asked Soggy, never tumbling to the racket as yet.

"Oh, he'll never miss them," replied Bill, and after hesitating a moment he bribed them to set the ladder up again, by dropping the cherries into the receiving sheet.

Once more he began to pick and fill his basket, while the boys picked and filled themselves, or rather, they filled themselves on what had been picked.

Well, they worked that racket on poor Soggy four times that afternoon, and got filled up just about the time that Soggy tumbled and got out of patience with them.

But Backstrap got all he wanted, although not half so many as he would have received from his favorite tree had it not been for Bob Rollick's stratagem. However, Soggy knew better than to tell the old fellow how there happened to be so few, for he knew that the blame would all fall on him, and that he would probably get cursed for his stupidity; so when the professor inquired the reason for there not being more than half a bushel, Soggy said the robins had carried them away.

"Gott in Himmel! Ah, I bade you dot I make me some stuffins out ofe dem pirds now righd avay!" he exclaimed, and loading up his gun he started forth to slaughter.

The boys were watching him and laughing to themselves, for they knew what Soggy had told him, and that he was trying to get square for the loss of his cherries.

He blazed away at a robin and brought down two, although he saw but one fall.

"Ah! now I dinks me dot you sdeal no more ofe my cherries!" they heard him growl, as he picked up one of the birds and carried it into the house as a trophy and something toward filling the measure of his wrath.

He proceeded to reload both barrels of his gun, all the while keeping an eye out to see if any more of the supposed cherry-thieves came around.

One of the smaller boys brought the other bird to Bob Rollick.

"Fellows, here's a chance for some more fun," said he, holding up the dead robin.

"How?" they all asked eagerly.

"Bring me a twig from the hedge there and I will show you."

With his knife, the strong twig, and a piece of string, he soon had the robin propped up so that it looked almost as though it was alive; then climbing to the top of another cherry-tree—one that the old man was not watching, and could not see from his window—he proceeded to tie the seemingly live bird on to the top of a dead limb, but up against a stout twig that would be sure to hold it in place.

Then coming down, he sent one of the small boys to tell Backstrap that there was another robin up in the tree, presenting a good shot, while the other boys waited in the shade to see the fun.

Backstrap seized his gun, and with firm-set lips started out for more revenge. The innocent-looking lad pointed out the robin.

"Ah! I bade you dot I gife you a pellyful of somedings nod so goot as cherries," muttered he, creeping nearer to the tree.

When in a good position he fired, but that robin never moved, and the boys had all they could do to keep from yelling right out.

"So—so, maybe dot vos nod enough," said he, and then, taking a sure aim, he let go the other barrel.

But still that cherry-stealer never budged. What was the meaning of it? Had he, in his excitement, forgotten to put any shot on top of the powder? And, even if he had, it seemed strange that the noise of the gun had not frightened the bird, and he hurried back to make sure of it this time. Being mad, he gave his gun a double charge.

He fired again, and the gun kicked him over. Then he was mad!

Yes, very mad!

Recovering himself, and picking up his gun, he slammed it down upon the ground in his fury, when the other barrel went off and shot his favorite cow in the stern part of herself, creating a commotion that was decidedly unique.

"Gott in Himmel!" they heard him grunt, as he picked himself up.

Several of the boys ran to his rescue; Bob Rollick was among the foremost.

"Are you hurt, sir?" they asked.

"Dot gun!" he moaned.

"Yes, sir."

"Dot gun vos too pad."

"So it seems."

"Dot gun vos a kicker."

"So we are sorry to know."

"Dot gun knocked me onct."

"Did you kill anything, sir?"

The old man looked up to see if the "bird" still remained on the limb. It was there just the same.

The cow, however, wasn't there, for she was running around the place with her tail up in the air like a flag-pole.

"Dem vos der queerest dings dot efer vos, but I bade you dot I shoot some stuslins ofe dot pird onct," said he, starting for the house to reload his gun, leaving the boys to laugh all they wanted to behind his back at the racket they were playing on him.

This time he got to within two rods of his game before he fired, and the shot not only cut off the twig against which the dead robin was tied, but tore the body into a thousand pieces. Therefore there was no chance of his ever finding out about the sell that had been so neatly played upon him.

But he felt awfully big over his triumph, and started back to the house, feeling that he had shown his pupils that when he undertook anything he carried it through in spite of everything.

Well, from that to supper time they had all the laugh they wanted, and, as they knew in this instance who it was that played the joke, they not only acknowledged it to be a bully one, but could guess very well who the originator of many others had been.

Of course there was some sort of fun going on nearly all of the time, in spite of the hard study that Professor Backstrap kept them at almost continually, but it was two or three weeks before another big racket took place, and, as it was a pretty good one, I may as well give it to you, though, of course, such things do not appear half so funny in print as they do when acted by their originators.

One day a picture peddler came through the town, and, being a German, Backstrap felt in duty bound to patronize him. So he bought four or five life-size chromo portraits of the English royal family, all framed and ready for business.

They were cheap, both in price and quality, but the price was the first thing that Backstrap considered. Their being cheap made them good and dear to him. In fact, he knew and cared but little about art anyway, so of course the cheaper a picture was, the better it pleased him.

But what to do with them now that he had got them was what puzzled him. He had no room for them unless he placed them on the walls of the school-room, and even then he would have to remove some of the maps which covered nearly every space.

But he finally concluded to have Screwjack, the carpenter, make a couple of frames about the usual size of a door, to the outside of which he could fasten the pictures, and hang the maps on the inside. These doors could also cover some book-shelves which occupied one corner of the school room, and when there was an occasion to use the maps the doors could be

thrown open, while other times the pictures could be on exhibition.

This the carpenter proceeded to do, and while it was going on, of course he and Bob Rollick had a chance to get their heads together for the planning of more mischief, and talk over the former racket of the dummy chair, which Screw-jack insisted was the best practical joke he had ever seen worked in his life.

Well, the job being finished, Backstrap proceeded to tell with much pride who the portraits represented, explaining to the boys that one of them was the picture of Prince Albert, another

which with Germans means any quantity of lager beer, and the natural result was that before dark they all three got very mellow.

As a finale to the entertainment he had given them, he took them to the school-room for the purpose of showing them his pictures.

"Dem vos de finest boartraids dot vos efer in dis country," said he, thickly, as they walked toward the school-room.

They were neither of them very steady on their pins, and the boys watched them, expecting to see some fun between the trio, but they

But while this was going on, Bob Rollick and Joe Bimm, who were inside of the closet, and had cut the faces out of the canvas so they could insert their own in the place of them, withdrew their mugs and let the canvas faces of the pictures return to their places again, making them appear all right, and natural, for it must be borne in mind that they did not cut the faces entirely out, but left a little of the canvas on the top so that it acted as a hinge, allowing it to fall back in place again, where it could be fastened and look as good as ever.

After rubbing their eyes some more they took



He knew when he had enough, and without a word that any one could hear, he continued his way until he had reached a harder bottom, when he turned and saw they had taken the boat in tow, and were rowing back again with it.

that of Queen Victoria, another the Prince of Wales, who would succeed his mother, and at her death become King of England, and so on to the last one, giving quite a little biography of each of them, especially dwelling upon the fact of Prince Albert's being a German, and the queen also of German descent.

"Dot vos all right now. Go mit your studies. How vos dot, Master Bimm? Vot for you make de monkey pizness mit your face?" he asked, catching Joe at one of his pranks.

"I wasn't doing anything, sir," he replied.

"Hey! I vos a lie, vos I? Come oud here a fiddle und led me see if I vos a liar. Come oud!" said he, seizing his ruler.

Joe obeyed reluctantly, but there was no escape for him. Seizing him by the collar of his jacket, he bent him over the stool of repentance, and gave two or three smacks on the seat of his pantaloons, and they were not baby-smacks either, for the old fellow had an idea that Joe had been making fun of his lecture.

Backstrap felt better, if Joe did not, and so the business of the day was fairly begun.

A few days afterwards the professor had a couple of German friends from New York to visit him. They arrived there just after school was over with for the day, and of course he entertained them in the good old-fashioned way,

managed to reach and open the door, after which they disappeared from view.

Several of the larger boys, however, knew that there was something to be seen inside, and so they went around to the back of the school-house, where they could look in at the windows between the slats and the blinds.

It was rather dusky in the school-room by this time, but it was evident that neither of the men noticed it, and if they could not see so well as they wished to, they probably attributed it to the beer they had partaken of so freely.

"Dere vos Queen Victoria, und dot glorious Deicherman, Brince Albert, und dot vos der Brince of Wales und der odder vons," said Backstrap, pointing to his art gallery.

The men looked at the queen and her husband, and then looked at the young princes.

Just then the "Prince of Wales" winked at them and the "Duke of Edinburgh" poked out his tongue in a most comical manner.

"Eh! Vot vos dot?" they asked each other, as they rubbed their eyes, and looked again at the strange and unaccountable conduct of the portraits.

"Gott in Himmel, bud dot vos queer!" mused Professor Backstrap.

"I dinks dot beer vos queer," said one of them, whereat they all laughed.

another look at the pictures, and, to their astonishment, found them to be all right.

"Oh, it vos dot beer," said one of the visitors.

"Bud it must be very strong, so strong like schnapps, to make portraits wink and stick deir tongues out," said the other, and again they laughed loudly.

Bob and Joe took advantage of this, and once more poked their faces through the canvas. Taking a final look as they started to go, the jokers winked and made up half a dozen kinds of "snoots" at them, and although it made them laugh, yet they hurried from the room, firmly believing that all was not right with them.

CHAPTER VIII.

THAT racket which Bob Rollick and Joe Bimm played on Professor Backstrap and his visitors, by cutting out the faces of two portraits and inserting their own, has, of course, not been forgotten by the reader, and the effect it had on Backstrap and his friends will also be remembered.

The trick was a good one that Bob Rollick had seen at a variety theater in New York, and it worked to a charm, as all of his snaps did.

and the other fellows who were watching the business through the blinds enjoyed it hugely.

The three Germans talked the matter over when they got outside of the school-room, but they took no more beer; they concluded that they had already had enough, if painted portraits winked and made up faces at them, and so they went home, leaving Backstrap alone to ponder over the matter.

The story of how College Point beer affected them created many laughs in the city where they told it, and the only conclusion arrived at was that they had taken something decidedly stronger than beer.

As for Backstrap, it puzzled him sorely.

"I cannot make it out," he would mutter to himself, as he sat alone in his study. "Dot vos some queer dings about dot," and he shook his head solemnly over it, and he looked solemn.

But he finally resolved to investigate it the next morning when the beer was out of his head, and see if everything was right, and if it proved to be so, he resolved to forswear beer.

A dozen or so of the boys gathered in Bob Rollick's room that evening to talk it over, and have their laugh out.

"But I say, Bob, won't he see where they are cut?" asked Bill Cortland.

"No, I guess not. I cut them with this brand-new sharp knife, and after we got through we pasted some strong mucilage-paper across on the back of the canvas, so they look as well as ever they did," replied Bob.

"Well, it was a good one, anyway."

"And I tell you those Dutchmen were scared to blazes, if they did laugh. We could see that after they came out," said Skinny Pearse.

"Yes, and they thought it was all on account of the beer they had drunk," said Joe Bimm, which occasioned another laugh.

"Now, wait until to-morrow and see his nibs watch those pictures," said Ned Goulding.

"Won't it be bully fun?"

"Yes, but see that you keep your mugs straight, or he may tumble to the racket, and some of us go to grass over the stool of repentance," said Bob, and with this understanding they separated for the night, going to bed laughing and once more blessing Bob Rollick for furnishing them with something to laugh at.

The next morning Professor Backstrap went before breakfast into the school-room to see if the portraits were all right. Of course he knew well enough that they were, but to satisfy his curiosity he went and took a look at them. He even opened the doors to see if everything was all right in the closet. By doing this he might have seen where they had pasted the paper over the backs of the faces, but the maps hung on the inside of the doors, and he never thought of looking under them.

"Py chimmey, it vos dot peer," he sighed, as he closed the doors again. "It vos der peer, und I swear me off righd avay," he muttered, as he started out for his regular morning walk before breakfast. "Yaw, dot seddles id."

Backstrap wore a solemn-looking mug all that day. Indeed, the boys had not enjoyed so much liberty for a long time during school hours. The old man seemed broken up and absent-minded, and, just as they had expected, he kept glancing nervously at the portraits that hung against the closet door.

This, of course, caused much amusement for the scholars, but they were careful not to let him see the smiling, for they all regarded the joke as too good to give away.

But strange as it may appear, Professor Backstrap regarded the matter with evident seriousness, and, not knowing what the result would be if he should continue to drink beer, he resolved to stop doing so, and take a quiet slide.

To do this more effectually he made up his mind to give more time to study, and to buy a horse, that he might indulge in horseback riding, as he had heard that recommended for cases like his.

But, mind you, here is where the laugh came in, so far as this part of the business was concerned. He was only a moderate drinker of beer, anyway, and never drank enough to do him any harm; but the conduct of those pictures frightened him, and he felt certain that he was

drinking too much. So, you see, after all, the joke turned out to be a sort of a temperance lecture for the old fellow.

Well, he looked around for a strong, gentle horse, especially adapted to saddle, and in a short time he had all the horse jockeys for miles around after him.

They gave him a great deal of bother, but he finally got stuck on one of them. The jockeys swore a whole volume of oaths that the horse was a regular thorough-bred; that he had a pedigree reaching back to the landing of Columbus; that he was as gentle as a lamb, and as fast as a comet, if put to it.

"But he is so poor as a crow," protested Backstrap, as he stood looking at the animal.

"Ah, my dear sir, did you ever see a genuine thorough-bred that was fat? Of course not. It is not the nature of the animal. No—no; they are natural racers, and a wise Providence has ordained that they should not be burdened with flesh," replied the horse jockey.

"Isli dot so?" mused the professor.

"Certainly. Ask any judge of horses in the world. No, sir; go the country over and you will not find a horse so well adapted to your wants as this one is. In fact, I have been keeping him for just such a customer as you are."

This settled the business, and Backstrap paid two hundred dollars for about forty dollars worth of hide, hoofs, and bones. But he was satisfied. It was a large horse, a high horse, and recommended very high. In fact, it was a good deal of live material for the money, that being as far as his knowledge of horses went.

But a good judge of horses would probably have valued him lower than I have; some persons, had they been going to buy him, would most likely have rated him at so much per pound, and got at what they could afford to pay by figuring so much for the hide, so much for soap-fat, so much for glue, and so much for the bones; but as there was, without doubt, a good deal of go in the old nag yet, I have estimated him at forty dollars, since "go" has to be paid for in this world.

Then he bought a saddle and bridle, and got all ready for business. The boys, of course, soon learned all about his new purchase, although they knew nothing about what made him do it.

"Say, did you see that skin full of bones that his nibs has bought?" asked Bob Rollick of some of his fellows.

"Yes; guess he's a racker," replied one of them.

"Guess he is; at all events, he'd be sure to rack the man to death who rode him."

"Racker! racker-bones, I guess," said Joe Bimm.

"I guess he's a pacer."

"Yes, slow pacer."

"Now I think he's a runner," said Skinny Pearse.

"I think so too, and he's pretty well run down," suggested Bill Cortland.

"I say he's a rattler."

"That's so, Tommy, and I'll bet you will hear him rattle when he trots," remarked Bob, and so they commented and laughed about the professor's new horse, all the while wishing that he would take his first ride so they could see how the old thing worked.

They had a chance the next morning, for the old man was up and mounted for an hour's ride before breakfast. Now the professor was no slouch as a rider, or he had not been in his younger days, and, like skating or swimming, when a person once becomes an adept, they never forget how to do it.

But the professor was not so fat when he rode horseback years ago, and he never rode on top of a "thorough-bred" before, so he did not feel so certain about what he could do now.

The boys were up quite as soon as he, or at least a portion of them, for Bob Rollick and his club had been down for an early swim. They saw Soggy bring the fiery, untamed steed up to the door.

Backstrap came out and with some difficulty threw himself into the saddle; not that the steed was restive, but because the rider was so fat.

"Whoa!" he yelled, although the horse stood as still as a tree. "Waid a liddle."

Probably he said this to give out the idea that he was a fiery steed, or perhaps he actually thought he was one of that sort, since he had bought him on such a strong recommendation. Soggy assisted him to get his feet into the stirrups, for he was so fat that he could not stoop down to do it himself, and grasping the bridle-reins, he was ready.

"So! Gid ub!" he cried.

The old nag took the hint and started on a walk, while the boys watched him from the roadside. Then the professor urged him into a trot.

"Did you hear him rattle?" asked Bob.

"Yes; he'll go all to pieces presently."

"He don't seem to be a 2:20 nag, does he?"

"No. I guess his nibs won't have much trouble in counting the mile-posts."

"Or the fence-posts, either."

"That's so. Why, he can take a nap while going from one telegraph-pole to another."

"Wonder what he calls him?"

"Bad names, I guess."

"Lightning, I guess."

"Or Comet."

"Or Snail."

"Or Bone Bag."

"Let us christen the old nag," suggested Bob.

"All right. What shall it be?"

"Make it something appropriate."

"Skeleton," suggested Skinny Pearse.

"No—no, that would be personal."

"What is it?"

"No, everybody knows what it is. How would this do—Potato Bug?" asked Bob.

"Good enough!" they all cried, in chorus.

"Potato Bug it is then," and they cheered so loudly that the professor looked back to see what the matter was.

That settled the name of the horse, for by breakfast-time the boys all knew and approved it.

Professor Backstrap rode for about an hour, returning just as the breakfast-bell rang, and although he did not lose his breath on account of the pace at which he went, he lost his patience on account of it, and nearly had his last night's supper shook out of him by the bouncing he got on the horse's back.

"Gott in Himmel!" he grunted, as he dismounted. "Dat is a puddy goot horse, but he go ub und down so much as he go aheat," and, rubbing himself, he went to his breakfast.

He had an appetite like an alligator, but he concluded after all that that was just what he stood in need of, and consequently the horse that could furnish it was just the nag he required. But the way he felt before night convinced him that he could not indulge in a horseback-ride every day with old Potato Bug unless he got a spring saddle.

Naturally enough the boys wanted a ride on the horse. Did a boy ever see a horse without wanting to get on the top of it? I've seen them climb a horse-chestnut and mount a horse-pistol.

Three or four rides satisfied Backstrap. He was no hog, and knew first-rate when he had got enough; and the horse was turned out into the pasture to see if a little leisure and good grass wouldn't take some of the sharp angles and kinks out of him.

The boys noticed that the professor stood up a great deal more than he used to, and moved about the school-room with a slow, limping walk, as though he was sore somewhere; but they could scarcely be expected to know what the matter was with him, never having ridden Potato Bug.

Saturday afternoon the professor went to the village on some business or other, but for some reason or other he did not go on horseback. No; Potato Bug was allowed to browse in his pasture and to knock the "thorough-bred" out of himself, by getting some extra flesh on his bones.

Now was a chance for the boys, for Soggy seldom, if ever, interfered with any of their doings, and there was no one else to do so.

"Come on, fellows!" cried Bob Rollick, starting on a run for the pasture as soon as Professor Backstrap was well out of sight.

Of course no second invitation was necessary, and about a dozen of them followed him down into the pasture.

Not the slightest difficulty was experienced in catching the horse. In fact, he approached them, seeing that Bob had something green in his hand.

"Whoa, Potato Bug!" several of them yelled.

Bob Rollick had an ear of green corn in his hand, and Potato Bug went for it. Bob also went for the Bug and caught him by the forelock.

"Here we are. Now who takes the first ride?"

Several fellows clamored for that honor, but

But he finally managed to slide off, and to limp away amid shouts of laughter.

"I'll bet I can ride him," said two or three.

"Let's try it two at a time," said Skinny Pearse.

"Three at a time!"

"Four; that will give him ballast enough so he will go steady," suggested Bill Cortland.

"That's so," replied Bob. "Wait until I catch him again."

And he went for him with that ear of corn.

"Potato bugs don't like corn!" shouted some-

gan to kick against this one-sided fun and tried to run away from it.

Skinny clung to the horse's neck and the others clung to him, but sometimes they were in the air and sometimes on the horse's backbone.

At first they laughed, but the laugh was soon knocked out of them, and with what breath they had left they called for Bob to stop the horse.

They had all the fiery, untamed steed they wanted, and Potato Bug had enjoyed all that sort of fun he cared about.



The overcharged gun kicked like a mule, and Backstrap was knocked over backwards, and landed under his bed, where the boys heard him yell like a stuck pig.

Bob decided that his chum, Joe Bimm, should have the first chance.

"Where's the ladder?" asked Joe, looking up at the tall rackabone of a horse.

"Get a balloon!"

"Climb a tree and jump down!"

"Make him do the camel act!"

"Catch hold of his tail and let him swing you up," and various other suggestions from the fellows were laughingly offered.

"Here, give me your foot," said Bill Cortland, "I'll bounce you up on top of him," and suiting his action to his words, he took Joe's raised foot and gave him a lift that sent him up astride.

"Oh—oh!" he cried.

"What's the matter?"

"His backbone is as sharp as a knife. Oh! let me down or he will split me in halves!"

At this point somebody stuck a pin into the nag, and away he cantered around the pasture, causing Joe to yell murder, and cling to his mane with all his might and main.

Several of the boys chased the animal for the purpose of keeping him moving, and at the same time keeping up the fun.

Oh, it was fun—for everybody but Joe and Potato Bug.

body, but this variety of them did, and so Bob had no trouble in again capturing him.

Holding him by the forelock as before, and this time allowing him to eat the corn, he called to the fellows to come along and get on.

Skinny Pearse and three others proceeded to get on his back, this time being assisted by the fence that Bob had led the Bug alongside of.

It was high fun. Skinny got on first, then Bill Cortland, followed by two others, and they covered the old horse all up.

"Now, Skinny, you hang on around his neck, and let each fellow hang on to the fellow in front of him," said Bob. "Are you all ready?"

"Yes; turn him loose!"

"Four Mazeppas on one fiery, untamed steed!" suggested Bill.

"Git!" shouted Bob, at the same time giving the nag a pin-prod which started him so suddenly that he nearly went out from under his load.

"Go it, Bed Bug!" shouted Joe Bimm, who knew how it was himself.

"Spring lamb and caper sauce!"

"Whoop him up some more!"

Bob was just doing that, and such a wild shaking up as those four fellows got was a caution.

Bob kept the nag going, but presently he be-

gan to take quite some time to coax him to discharge his passengers; in fact, he seemed rather inclined to shake them off while on a run.

They finally got down, however, the sorest and sickest lot of fellows ever seen.

"How did you like it?" asked Joe Bimm.

"Oh, it's splendid; but I've got enough; I'm no hog. Let the other fellows have some," replied Bill Cortland, rubbing himself.

But the other two fellows didn't want any. They were all willing to take the word of those who had taken a ride, and so Potato Bug seemed destined to be let alone in future, a thing that evidently pleased him first-rate.

They laughed for some time over the rough adventure, when a new idea seemed to strike Bob Rollick, who enjoyed the fun even more keenly than any of the rest of them.

"I say, fellows, we can have some fun with old Potato Bug yet," said he.

"No more in mine, if you please," whined Skinny Pearse, limping away.

"I don't mean riding him."

"Well, how then?"

"Just wait a shake and I'll show you. Here, Ned, go and get me another big ear of corn."

"All right."

"Has any fellow got some string?"

"What kind?"

"I want a long, strong piece of string; something like a fish-line."

"I've got a fish-line here," said Tommy Boutwell, producing it.

"That's all right. Now, hold on until I can find a pole," he added, going towards the garden.

"What's he going to do, I wonder?"

"Going fishing for a Potato Bug, I guess," said Skinny, trying to laugh.

"I'll bet he'll make some fun, anyway, for he's the boss boy of all the school for that business."

"Here he comes with a bean-pole. He'd better look out that Soggy don't catch him."

"Oh, he'n' Soggy are all right."

Bob returned with a pole that he had stripped the bean vines from, and, taking the ear of corn, he tied it to the smallest end by a string about a foot long. This done, he took the husks and went towards the horse, for the purpose of making friends with him again.

"Here, Bill, come and hold him," said he, after gaining his confidence once more. And Bill did as directed, taking the nag by the fore lock, and treating him to the corn husks.

The other fellows came up to see what Bob was going to do, and he proceeded to show them.

There was a short rope around the horse's neck, and he ran the pole under this in such a way as to have it lie nearly between his ears on the top of his head, and running it down the whole length of his neck, he proceeded to wind the fish-line about it in such a way as to fasten it upon his neck, leaving the tempting ear of corn dangling about on a level with his nose, but about a foot beyond his reach.

The pole was made secure in its place, and then they all stepped away to watch the result.

Potato Bug had just finished the corn husks, and caught sight of that ear of corn.

Seeing it so near, he went for it, but of course he was unable to reach it, on account of the corn going just as fast as he did.

But he never stopped to notice that. He only saw that the corn was still there, and kept after it with open mouth and ears erect, while the boys laughed and yelled with delight.

Indeed, it was a comical sight, and they perched themselves on the fence to take it in.

After walking after that ear of corn for five or six minutes, he evidently began to think he hadn't speed enough on, and so began to trot.

This was even more comical still, and to see him trotting around with open mouth and eyes, with tail, head and ears erect, and a look of expectancy on his face; but when he found that he could not overtake it by trotting, and began to run as fast as he could, the boys fairly yelled, and some of them fell from the fence.

But in a few moments they heard Soggy coming up the lane singing to himself, and not wishing him to know who had done the business, they cheeved it on the run, and got quickly out of sight behind a hedge.

When Soggy saw the horse he was utterly amazed, and tried to catch him to see what he was chasing at such a furious rate, but he could not do it—Potato Bug was bound to get that corn.

But just as he was about to give up trying to catch him, Professor Backstrap came upon the scene, and stopped in amazement at beholding the antics of his thorough-bred.

CHAPTER IX.

The reader will remember that Professor Backstrap came upon the scene just after Bob Rollick and the other boys had lit out, leaving the old horse, Potato Bug, cantering around the pasture like mad, trying to catch up with an ear of green corn which had been fastened to a pole which projected just beyond the reach of his nose.

"Donder und blitzen!" he exclaimed, after watching the horse for a moment. "Vot vos der matter mit dot horse?" he called to Soggy, who had himself just been trying to find out.

"That I does na knoo, mon. I just noo come here an'seed him at ut loike that," replied the astonished Yorkshireman.

The young rogues were where they could see and hear without being seen themselves, and and you bet they kept mighty quiet.

"Gott in Himmel, look at him! Vot vos dot py his snood oud?"

"Na, I does na knoo, but it looks loike a y'ear of coorn," replied Soggy.

"Ter tuyfel is in dot horse!" muttered Backstrap, getting over the fence for the purpose of coming near enough to find a solution to the mystery.

By this time the horse had become so tired with his long and fruitless run that he was quite satisfied to stop when the professor called to him, and he gave a snort of disgust when Soggy and Backstrap approached him cautiously from opposite directions.

"Gott in Himmel!" exclaimed the old man, as he got near enough to see what it was.

"Yes, it be coorn," said Soggy.

"Vot vos dot pizness somehow? Who vos blay dot funny pizness mit my horse? Vere vos dem poys al. der vile?" he demanded, savagely.

"I does na knoo, mon. I ha' na seen 'em."

"Where you vos all der vile?"

"Beyond in the potato field."

"I bade you dot some of dem poys make dot funny pizness mit dot corn," said the professor, taking out his pocket-knife and cutting the string which held the pole to the horse's neck.

"They be groot rogues, sur," replied Soggy, just as the old horse made a snap at the ear of corn, which he this time succeeded in capturing.

"Und I bade you dot I make some poooty goot dancing for dot," said Backstrap, and seizing his cane, he started toward the school-house with blood in his eye and a good basting in his heart for every boy in school.

His great revenge had stomach for them all.

But only a few of the smaller boys could be found anywhere around, and of these he learned that they had for the most part been out in the woods after berries, and not one of them would admit that he had been within fifty rods of the pasture where the horse was during the day.

These boys he counted up and took a mental record of their names so that he could remember who the others were who had not given an account of themselves, and these embraced all the larger scholars of his school.

"I bade you somedings wot I know," he muttered to himself, as he turned away, grasping his cane firmly as though he both hoped and expected to meet some of the delinquent rogues.

But Bob Rollick had taken stock of the whole business and at once began to hedge, that is, to prepare for squalls.

"Now, fellows, we are in a snap, and must get out of it somehow, for the old man will be sure to fasten this business on some of us," said he.

"I'm afraid he will," replied Bill Cortland, looking a trifle serious. "But what shall we do?"

"Let's all break up and return in couples," said Skinny Pearse.

"No, that will never do. We have got to have something to show what we have been doing or he will surely lay it to us. Let me see," he mused, while trying to think of some way out of the scrape.

"Let's go fishing," suggested Joe Bimm.

"That would be a bully idea, only, where are our lines?" asked Bob. "No, that won't do, either. Chestnuts aren't ripe, so we can't work that dodge, and if we carry home a lot of fruit he will swear we have been robbing somebody's orchard."

"Let's run away and join a circus."

"Let's hire out for engineers on a canal."

"Engineers?"

"Yes; to drive mules on the tow-path."

This suggestion produced a laugh, although it did not relieve their feelings much, and during the next few minutes they walked along the shore road without saying much.

Presently they came upon a couple of fishermen who had just rowed ashore with a load of fish.

"Ah, I have it!" exclaimed Bob Rollick.

"Hold on! What is it like?" asked Joe.

"An idea. Hold on a minute, boys, let me

see if I can work it," said Bob, starting toward the fishermen.

Going up to them, he said:

"What luck?"

"Oh, from fair to middling," they replied.

"Want to sell your fish?"

"Why, of course we do; that's what we caught them for. But what do you want of fish?" asked one of them, giving the natty Bob a looking over.

"Well, I'll tell you. We belong to this school up here, and we have been having some fun with the professor's horse this afternoon. He probably suspects us, and we have got to have something to make good with."

"Make good?" they asked, in surprise.

"Yes, something to show that we haven't been near his old nag. Now, if you will sell us your fish we can work it."

"All right."

"How much for the lot?"

"Well, there's about fifty of 'em, great and small. Say two dollars for the lot."

"Good enough! Here's your coin. Come here, lads," he added, calling to his friends.

The fishermen began to throw their catch into a basket, while the boys gathered around.

"Now, duffers each one of you cut a crotched twig to string fish on," said Bob, setting the example.

With a glad cheer they flew to the bushes that grew by the side of the road, and in a minute or so returned to the boat, prepared to get the fish on a string.

There were quite enough of them to give each a lusty string, and, in fact, quite as much of a load as either of them wished to carry.

"Now, how many lines have you got?" asked Bob, after they had strung the fish.

"Oh, 'bout half a dozen. Why?" asked one of the fishermen, wonderingly.

"Why, suppose the old man tumbles to the snap, and wants to know where our fishing tackle is?"

The fishermen laughed with the boys.

"Sell us your tackle?"

"Certainly, if you pay us enoogh for it."

"All right; how much for the lot?"

"Say a dollar and a half."

"All right. Who'll chip in? I paid for the fish," said Bob, looking at the other fellows.

"I will," said three or four of them, and in a few minutes the whole sum was made up.

"Now, then, come on, for it is nearly supper time," said Bob, turning to go.

"Success to ye, boys," said one of the men, calling after them.

"All right," cried they cheerfully.

"Now, fellows, we must brace up and show some style," said Bob.

"What sort of style?"

"Fishermen style. We must all agree upon a story. Understand, we have been out to a new place beyond the Point, but pretend that we want to keep it a secret, and that we have been gone all the afternoon. Got it now?"

"Yes, all right; we'll all swear to the same story," said they, and then continued their way around the road, so as to be seen coming from the direction of where the boats were kept.

By the time they got in sight of the school-house they were all pretty tired, and had got sobered down to the point of knowing how to act.

Professor Rackstrap was on the lookout for them, and by this time he had worked himself up to a boiling point of frenzy.

He espied them coming toward him, each lugger a big string of fish. In an instant it occurred to him that they could not be guilty of the mischief with his horse, since they had been fishing, which would naturally have employed them all the afternoon.

They approached, laughing, talking, and singing, as innocent boys, proud of what they had caught, naturally would, and then he was mad again because their innocence was so apparent, even without asking a question.

"Donner und blitzen!" he muttered to himself, "how vos dot anyway?"

Some of the boys who had remained at or near the play-ground during the afternoon, now ran to meet the amateur fishermen, loud in their

exclamations of astonishment at the evidences of luck which they were burdened with.

Backstrap overheard this spirited, and to all appearances innocent conversation, as they dwelt upon the merits of the new fishing-ground they had discovered off the Point, and this convinced him almost beyond a doubt that not one of them knew anything about the horse business.

But who could it have been?

"See here, Professor Backstrap, see what a fine lot of fish we have caught," said Bob, approaching and holding up his string.

"Aboud some ears of corn dot make him go round dot pasture all der vile like mat, und nobody know aboud id."

"Maybe it was tramps, sir."

"Dramps?"

"Yes, sir; we saw two of them going across the pasture when we started out fishing," said Bill.

"So," mused Backstrap. "Maype id vos dramps, but I bade you I gife dem some shot-guns mit two parrels bimeby righd avay."

"And they deserve it, sir. It is a wonder they hadn't stolen him," suggested Bob.

business was to make believe sick; and in order to have good grounds for seeming so, he proposed that they all eat a few of those wild cherries and then claim to be sick from them.

They followed his instructions to the letter, and by Saturday noon they all claimed to be sick. It was a comical sight to see them and the mugs they made up, and the cramps they pretended to have. In fact, so well did they play it that some of them were even dismissed before noon.

That fishing excursion was of course abandoned, and, greatly to the delight of the rogues,



"Moly Hoses!" exclaimed Backstrap, as he examined the sheet-iron cat which he had riddled with shot, and which Bob Rollick had placed on the back fence to torment him, "vot vos dot?"

"And look at this one," said Joe Bimm.

"See mine," chimed Skinny Pearse.

"And mine beats them all," chirruped Tom King.

"No, mine is just as good as yours," said Bill Cortland, holding up his fish.

"And we are going to give them all to you, Professor Backstrap," added Bob, earnestly.

If there had been a solitary, lingering suspicion in the old man's heart, this generous act would have removed it, for wasn't there fish enough to make at least two meals for the school?

"Dat ish goot mess fish, und I thank you."

"And you are very welcome," replied Bob.

"Dot vos a great catch, boys."

"Yes, we found a place where they were just as thick as we could pull them in."

"Dot vos all righd. I go mit you ned Saturday, und we bring home a boat load," said he, at which there was a sudden dropping of lower jaws.

"Yes, sir," Bob managed to say, without betraying much confusion.

"Hafe you been gone all der afternoon?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very well; und you know nod about some foolishness mit my horse?"

"No, sir; what foolishness?"

Just then the supper bell rang, and the boys hurried to the kitchen to hand their fish over to the cook, after which they felt hungry enough to eat almost anything that they could bite.

But, as Bob Rollick had expected, this fish snap got them out of the scrape, and the old man never knew but that the trick had been played upon his horse by tramps.

There was only one drawback to the complete success of the racket, and that was the proposition of Professor Backstrap to accompany them on the following Saturday. But they concluded that they could get out of it in some way, even if they all had to be taken suddenly sick.

And so they laughed joyously over the way they had fooled the professor, the fun of the thing lasting them nearly the whole week, although on Friday it was taken out of them by Backstrap's informing them that he had made calculations to go with them the following afternoon for the purpose of catching another big boat-load of fish.

This was a perfect crusher, but Bob Rollick was equal to the emergency again.

Near the school-house there grew a large wild cherry tree, the fruit of which was just now ripe. Bob talked it over with the boys, and persuaded them that the only way to get out of the

the professor said nothing about going at any other time.

This was bully for the boys, whose sickness, of course, did not last long after the fishing business had been given up, and as for Backstrap, he never tumbled to the racket at all.

In all this Bob Rollick was acknowledged to be the hero and leading spirit. But it did seem as though there never was a fellow that had such luck. Other fellows got caught at their deviltry every now and then, but Bob always escaped somehow, and not only that, but he continued to remain a favorite with the professor, who often held him up as a good example to follow, when every mother's son or them knew that he was the king pin of all mischief.

The truth was, Bob studied his mischief the same as he did a sum in arithmetic, and worked out all the probabilities and liabilities before he took a start, notwithstanding it seemed to those around that he jumped at things hap-hazard just as they were apt to do.

I have before mentioned that the boys had several sorts of clubs, and that among them was a swimming club, of which Bob Rollick was the captain, as he was of the most of the clubs by this time, and nearly every day after school hours they enjoyed a swim.

Skinny Pearse was a member of this club at one time, but the boys played so many pranks with him in the water that he kicked at last, and refused to join in the sport, at least with them.

But in order to get hunk with the fellows who bothered him in the water, he used to get into one of the boats, and row around among the swimmers, and whenever he dared to, bang them playfully over the back with the flat of his oar, or run them down or over them with the boat.

This thing went on for some time, for Pearse was a cruel and vindictive fellow, and finally he became a nuisance. The little fellows, who were for the most part his victims, at length complained to Bob Rollick, whom he had taken very good care not to molest, and begged him to put a stop to it.

Bob promised he would, and the next day he laid out a programme for a half-mile swim for the championship, having it understood with the little fellows that they were to enter the race and brag as much as possible about what they were going to do.

This, of course, excited Skinny's contempt, which was just what Bob wanted.

"You duffers swim half a mile! Why, you can't swim two rods and return."

"Well, you keep away from us, and you will see what we can do," said Harry Field.

"Bah!" and then he laughed to think how much he would keep away.

"Well, if you do bother us this time, you'll get the worst old thumping you ever got."

"I will, hey?"

"Yes, you will, hey."

"Who'll give it to me?"

"We will. We've stood your fooling just as long as we're going to, and don't you forget it."

"Oh, no, I won't forget it. I ain't that sort of a cat, oh, no!" and he turned away with a contemptuous, mocking laugh.

Skinny was getting to be a growler again, and needed to be taken down a peg or two. He was bound to get that way every now and then if somebody didn't sit on him, for that is the way with growlers.

Bob Rollick had taken the ugly out of him once or twice, and he knew that he was itching for it again. It did him as much good as a dose of physic does a sick fellow now and then.

Well, the boys gathered at the boat-dock, where the swimming match was to take place. Nearly twenty of them were on hand, ready to compete for the championship of the school, and there was considerable excitement, especially among the younger fellows.

They, of course, did not know anything about Bob Rollick's racket. They simply supposed that he intended to protect them against Skinny Pearse, who was on hand with the earliest, chaffing those whom he could bully, and proposing all sorts of bets that none of them would succeed in going over half the distance in any time at all, let alone winning the belt.

But it must not be supposed that these little fellows took all his chaff and blackguarding without talking back. They gave him as good as he sent, while they could keep out of his way, and when he got into one of the boats and began paddling around the dock, they threw rotten apples at him just for the sake of hearing him say what he would do when he got a chance.

There was a stake driven a quarter of a mile from the wharf, and in order to win the prize the swimmer must go around it and return to the wharf first, there being no second or third prizes.

Bob and the larger boys kept by themselves, having agreed upon a course of action with regard to Skinny; but, when all was ready, they stripped and stood in a line on the outer end of the wharf, ready for Bob to give the word, when they were all to take a header and strike out for glory.

"Are you all ready?" asked Bob, looking around.

"Yes," was the reply.

"Now for a header. One—two—dive!"

The whole row plunged head-first into the water like so many frogs, some of them swimming a rod or two under water before "bobbing

up serenely from below," and striking out for the goal.

Skinny chuckled as he saw them dive, and as they struck out he rowed slowly after them, not calculating to molest them until they had got well out into the Sound, when they had got too tired to dash water up into the boat at him, and when Bob Rollick and the larger boys would most likely be well in advance of them.

But he kept up his chaffing all the while, and bothered them all he could without striking them with his oars, although he dashed water with them into their faces as they struggled along.

Bob was not so much in advance, and in fact, none of the larger boys appeared to be doing their best.

"I say, Skinny, row out to the stake, and see who goes around it first," said he.

"All right," and delighted at being appointed judge, he left the boys alone and rowed ahead of the whole party toward the stake.

Then Bob and the other fellows followed faster than they had gone as yet, keeping quite close to the perspiring fat boy.

Reaching the stake, he took a position just outside of it, and rested on his oars.

Somehow or other the approaching contestants seemed to be all in a bunch together, but Skinny only thought how close he would have to watch in order to see who was first around.

They all came up to the stake in a bunch, but instead of going around it, they began to swim around the boat.

Bob Rollick and Joe Bimm seized one of the oars that projected over the side of the boat, and Tom King and Bill Cortland seized the other at the same instant, and before Skinny was aware of it he had no oars, while the boys in the water were laughing at his plight.

"Here, give me back them oars!" he cried.

"Oh, yes, we will; that's the sort of cats we are," replied one of the little fellows, swimming away with an oar, while another laughing youngster took the other one in charge.

While he was still undecided what to do, or what they would do, Bob Rollick and one or two others swam alongside and behind the helpless boat, and gave it a push further into the current, that was even now setting fast toward Hell Gate, and then they swam laughing back toward the shore, leaving the poor fellow alone and utterly helpless.

"You are smart, aren't you?" but he only got a laugh in reply. "You'd better give me them oars, or I'll tell old Backstrap about that horse racket."

"Then we'll drown you sure," returned Bob.

"Oh, won't I fix you fellows for this!" said he, standing up in the boat and shaking his fist at them.

"Good-bye, Skinny. Write us when you get to New York," called Bob Rollick.

The tide bore him away, and all the consolation he got was the chorus of laughter from the swimmers.

CHAPTER X.

THE object Bob Rollick had in view was well accomplished, and Skinny Pearse, who had tormented the little fellows so much while they were swimming, was now afloat on the tide which was bearing him toward New York at the rate of four miles an hour, and without the oars to help himself with.

It will be borne in mind that Bob and his chums had taken them from him while he was acting as judge of the swimming match, to pay him for imposing as he had upon the smaller boys.

And here he was, liable to bring up he knew not where, and with no one in sight who would or could lend him any assistance.

He sat sullenly down in the boat and looked back at the boys, who had by this time reached the shore, and were holding up the oars for him to look at, paying him back in his own coin.

Of course he swore to himself, and while grating his teeth thought what he would do, although he soon thought better of putting his first threat into execution, that of telling Professor Backstrap who it was that had played the trick with his horse, and how they had fooled

him about it, for he knew very well that Bob Rollick would make it too hot for him to remain at the school.

But what was to be done? How should he contrive to steer the boat ashore?

He reached over the stern and tried what he could do with his hand, but he could do simply nothing.

Then he tried to pull out one of the seats to see if he could do any better with that, but he might as well have tried to rip out the gunwale. There was nothing that he could get to assist himself with, and he finally sat down, discouraged and disgusted.

By this time he had drifted a mile or more from home, and night was coming on, but where or when he would fetch up was decidedly uncertain; and meanwhile the boys had dressed themselves, watching him all the time with keen satisfaction.

Bob Rollick and three or four others got into the other boat and followed him; and by the aid of oars and tide they soon caught up with him, or, at least, came within hailing distance of him.

But where did they find him?

By this time his boat had drifted upon a point of flats, two miles or more from where he started, and at least a mile from any house.

There they found him up to his middle in the mud. He had jumped ashore to see what prospect there was of going across the meadow and flats and reaching a road that would take him back to the school.

He found the mud a great deal softer than he anticipated, and in jumping in the bow of the boat he had got into the predicament in which they had found him.

"Halloo, Skinny! what are you doing there?" cried one of the boys.

"Hunting clams?" asked Bob Rollick.

"Where's your gun?"

"If I had a gun I'd set an eel-pot with one of you fellows," said Skinny, savagely.

"What's the matter with you, anyway? What are you doing there?"

"None of your business. But don't you make any mistake, Bob Rollick, I'll give you away bad enough, see if I don't."

"Better get out of the mud first."

"Want to ride home?"

"No; I wouldn't go with you."

"Well, stay there alone then."

"No, I won't. You fellows go to the deuce. I can work my way out of this."

"Better hurry up before old Backstrap finds you, for he owes you one now."

"I wish he was here, that's what I do."

"Perhaps you think he would snake you out of the mud—ha-ha-ha!"

"Shut up, you cowardly duffers," replied Skinny; and taking the boat's painter in one hand, he began to struggle along the shore at a slow rate, pulling the boat after him with some difficulty.

"Go it, boots!" and other tantalizing exclamations were yelled at him, but of which he took no notice.

They watched him for some time as he struggled along the oozy shore, but presently, in leaping from one harder spot to another, the rope slipped from his hand, and was instantly adrift beyond his reach, unless he swam for it.

The boys sent up a cheer, and instantly started for it, determined to tow it home, and let Skinny tow himself there as best he might.

"All-right; take it along; I don't care. But don't forget that I'm going to get square with you," cried he, shaking his muddy fist at them.

"All right, Skinny, old boy; but don't get excited; keep your shirt on or you might get cold," said Bob.

"I sha'n't get so cold but that I'll make it hot enough for you."

"You'd better try it."

"Well, you see if I don't."

"Want to hit us little fellows again when we are in swimming?" asked Harry Field.

But Skinny made no reply to this. He was no hog if he was as fat as one; he knew when he had enough, and without a word that any one could hear, he continued his way until he had reached a harder bottom, when he turned

and saw they had taken the boat in tow, and were rowing back again with it.

But until now he never thought that his cap, jacket and shoes were in the boat, and that all he had on was his shirt and trousers.

Here was a predicament, and he called to them:

"Bring back my clothes!" but a mocking laugh was the only response he awakened, so he proceeded along the mucky shore, inwardly cursing, but at the same time as sick a boy as ever was made to swallow his own medicine.

But after struggling for some time, he finally

starting down the road, in which he would meet the unlucky fat boy, more than likely.

"Sh!" whispered Bob. "Now keep it up; just stick to it that he was going to steal the boat and row to New York, and that we got it away from him on the flats, and then we shall have the bulge on him."

"That's so; and old Backstrap will give him a pasting that will do him good," said Bill Cortland.

"Now let's go up and get supper."

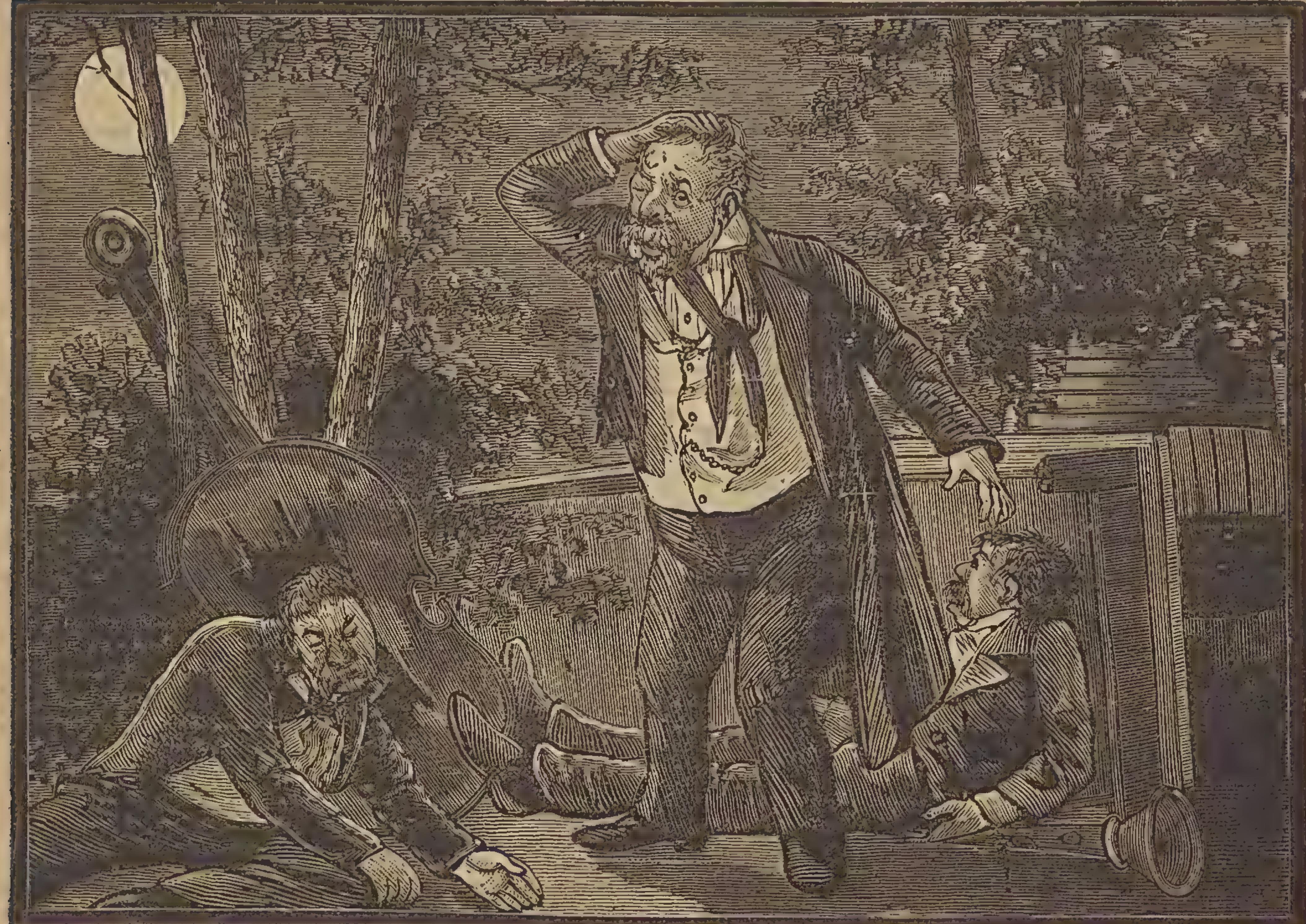
"Yes, if we can get any. The bell rang more

tance from where they were, he was waiting quite as anxiously as they were.

Presently they heard a movement and saw Skinny coming up the road. Backstrap waited until he had got opposite to him, and then he rushed out with uplifted cane and seized him, Skinny being so scared, thinking that perhaps he might be a highwayman, that he could not run.

But he knew who it was the next instant.

"Donder und blixen, I bade you!" the professor roared as he gave Skinny a tremendous whack with his cane.



One of Backstrap's eyes were closed, but that didn't bother him much, for there were no lights to assist it, and he was otherwise badly broken up.

reached the dry land, near which ran the road leading back to College Point and the school. But he was a sight to behold, for he was nearly all covered with mud, wet, sore and disgusted; and as soon as he had recovered his breath a little, he started for home, glad that it was by this time so dark that those whom he might meet would not recognize him.

Meantime the boys had reached the dock with the boats, where they met Professor Backstrap, who had become alarmed and indignant at their staying away so long, and had come to find out about it.

"Dot vos pudy pizness, don't id? - Where haf you been all der vile so late?" he demanded.

"We have been after Frank Pearse, sir," replied Bob.

"Where vos dot Pearse?"

"He got mad and ran away with this boat. We got it away from him and left him away down on Flat Point."

"Where is he now?"

"We've got his cap and shoes and jacket here in the boat, and he is walking back by the road," said Bob, pointing to them.

"So-so; I go for him und make him come home midout his subber, I bade you," said he, at the same time grasping his cane firmly, and

than half an hour ago, and I'll bet two to one that we don't get a snoot full."

"Well, come on and let's see;" so they all started toward the school, laughing and speculating upon the reception Skinny would be likely to get.

But the reception they got at the dining room was a cold one. The table had been cleared off, and there wasn't eloquence enough in the whole party to persuade the cook to set it again, or to furnish them with even a cold bite.

"Bad manners ter ye," said she, "if ye can't come when it's ready, go ter thunder for yer grub!" and that settled it.

There was no appeal from Bridget's decision when she knew she was right.

So they had to rub their bellies and make a supper on cold water and green apples, which made them rub some more the next day.

But they concluded to make the best of it and go to some place where they could see Skinny and Backstrap as they returned up the road.

Several other fellows went with them, and they found a hedge that skirted the road, behind which they could hide and at the same time see who passed.

Meantime Backstrap had concluded to hide himself in the very same hedge, not caring to walk very much, and although he was some dis-

"Ouch—ouch! oh!" whooped Skinny.

"Run avay mit my poat, vill you?" cried the excited professor, giving him another crack.

"I—I—I didn't run away; I—"

"Ah, mine chiminy! I give you some more for dot lies vot you tell," and he did, causing the unhappy victim to dance and roar like a bull.

"I—I didn't, sir. Bob Rollick and the other boys stole my oars and let me drift away."

"Ah! I gife you some more for dot," and he did.

Poor Skinny! he was out of the frying-pan into the fire, sure enough.

"Now git home mit you puddy gwick or I make some plisters mit your bantaloons," said he, giving him a push and another whack.

Skinny Pearse didn't wait for another invitation to git; he knew when to go, and would have done so before if the old man hadn't held him.

He skipped as fast as his fat legs would carry him, and made his way back to the school, followed by Backstrap and the boys at a little distance.

The reason that Backstrap had been so ready to believe the yarn that had been told him, was that Pearse's parents had cautioned him about letting him run away, as they believed that he

had a strong desire to go off and become a sailor; and the old professor concluded that he would take the "salt" out of him, even if he did not clean him of the mud he was wearing.

What a laugh those rogues did have!

As for the professor, he concluded that he had punished him enough for that time, and, being exceedingly tired, he went to his room, feeling sure that Pearse would do the same thing.

The other fellows stole softly into their rooms and finished their laugh under the bed-clothes. But they threw his clothes over the transom of his room door before finishing with him, so that he could dress himself in the morning.

Once more let us exclaim "poor Skinny!" or on reaching his room, more dead than alive, he was one of the worst broken-up fellows ever seen; nor did his room-mate have much sympathy for him, knowing that he had only received honest pay for the abuse and knocks he had given many of the smaller boys.

Very little, indeed, he slept that night, and in the morning he found himself used up and sore, and so begrimed with mud that he arose early and went for a swim the first thing, for he needed a wash if ever a fellow did.

He met his grinning school-fellows at breakfast, but sullenly refused to notice them, all the while looking ugly enough to sour new milk.

But he got a chance to paste one little fellow in the snout for laughing at him as they came from breakfast, and this made him feel better. Indeed, it seemed to take the ache all out of his bones.

Professor Backstrap eyed him sharply at the table, and after school had been called to order, he said to him:

"Master Pearse, I have written a ledger to your fader about dot trying to run away, und to go to some sea, und believing dot he will make id all right mit you, I shall nod flog you some more."

"But I didn't attempt to run away, sir."

"Stop dot or I shall make some more fun mit you for dem lies," roared the professor.

This bluffed Skinny completely, and seeing that he was likely to get a whaling if he told the truth, and not get one if he admitted a lie, he concluded to say no more, and so the matter dropped.

But, oh! how mad he was! Whew! And so Bob Rollick got out of another snap, and got his friends off, too; for seeing how matters stood, Skinny concluded to say nothing more about the matter, and study out some other way of getting even with the jokers.

But to prove that this lesson did him good, Skinny was one of the nicest fellows in the world after he had gotten well over his pout, for afterwards he joined in the laugh against himself, having sense enough to know that this was the quickest way to get over the business and to keep them from giving him any further rackets, although it is safe to say he never molested any of the little fellows afterward.

The first of September was now upon them, and the weather was a trifle cooler. Farmers were gathering their crops, and tired nature seemed to be making preparation for taking a rest.

Now the more muscular games of base and foot-ball could be played, and the boys of Professor Backstrap's school were not long in finding it out, as they were not in finding out where choice fruit and water-melons grew, as the farmers in the neighborhood strongly suspected.

One of the farmers went to Backstrap to complain of his melon-patch being sampled, although he could not swear that his boys had done it, and the result was that he could prove nothing, and only succeeded in getting the professor mad and being ordered by him to leave the premises.

"All right for you, old man, but I shall lay for those rascals of yours, and the first one I catch on my grounds I will give him a charge of shot, and don't you forget it," snarled the farmer.

"You may gife them your gun for all I care," howled the professor. "Go way mit yourself

aboud dot pizness dot you know nodding aboud."

"All right, but you'll see some of your boys brought home on a stretcher if you don't keep them at home," replied the farmer.

"Bring 'em home on a steam car if you vants to, ondly get oud."

That farmer went.

The boys formed themselves into two teams for the purpose of playing foot-ball, and as Backstrap was a great lover of out of door sports, he took considerable interest in the game, watching it closely whenever they indulged in a game, and encouraging either side to greater activity.

But the greatest fault he found with them was the inability of most of them to kick the ball far enough whenever they got a good chance.

"Dot vos a paby kick," he would say. "Vhy don't you kick id some stuffin' out?"

Bob Rollick conceived it to be a good idea to get the old man to take the place of one of the rushers, but there was too much violent exercise in it for a man of his weight, and he wouldn't have it even after Bob had politely asked him to.

But he insisted upon it that the boys didn't kick with vigor enough; that theirs was baby play in comparison with that of German schools, or even the average American ones.

"Perhaps you will show us," suggested Bob. "We are to have a game after school, and if you wish, I will give you a chance for one kick at the ball, just to show us how to do it."

"Maybe, I bade you," said he, signifying that he would give them one specimen kick, provided he got a good chance, and Bob at once reported it to the boys, expecting to have some fun.

That afternoon, when the game commenced, Professor Backstrap was on hand to watch it, shouting out now and then to tell the younger fellows how to play.

Bob and his pals had it all understood between them, and at a certain stage of the game he kicked the ball in such a way as to have it fall near where the professor stood, and with nobody around to rush after it, so as to "give the old man a chance."

"Ha!" he exclaimed, and throwing down his cane, he rushed for the ball, while several of the boys ran up and pretended to get it away from him. "Keep pack, und I show you how dot vos aboud kicking some food-pall," he cried, and taking it up in his hands, he began to make ready.

Probably the old fellow hadn't kicked a football since he was a student, but he evidently believed that he could do it just as well as ever.

In fact, he looked up once or twice to see if any of the stars were in the way and liable to get hurt by the ball, and then began to brace and poise himself for a grand effort.

He dropped the ball and attempted to give it a tremendous kick at the same time for the purpose of sending it out of sight at least.

But he missed the ball, and the upward fling of his big foot jerked the other one from under him, and down he went like a cow, bump!

"Ough!" came from the innermost recesses of his corporosity, and several of the boys smothered their laughter, and ran to help him up.

"Are you hurt, professor?" asked Bob, with a look of sorrow and anxiety in his face.

"Gott in Himmel!" he grunted, when the wind came back to him again.

"Did it hurt you, sir?" asked Skinny Pearse.

"Donder und—" and seizing a stone he hurled it at the unlucky inquirer. "You is von shackass fool, if you ask such foolishins," he added, as Bob and two or three others assisted him to arise.

"No bones broken, I hope, sir?"

"Mine gracious, I don'd know aboud dot," he grunted.

"Here is your cane, sir," said one of the boys, who had picked it up to hand to him.

"Ough! dot vos pad," he mused.

"Want to try it again?" asked Bill King, offering him the foot-ball.

The look the old man gave him was enough to wither a July cabbage.

"Donder und blitzen!" he exclaimed, as soon as ever he could catch his breath, and then he raised his cane and would have gone for him had he not been so nearly knocked out himself. "Mine pack is proke!" he finally groaned.

"We hope not, sir," and Bob on one side and Bill Cortland on the other, assisted him to walk back to his room.

He wasn't severely hurt, but he had received a tremendous shaking up, and felt as though a house had fallen on him.

The game was resumed after this, and every fellow took part in it with a grin on his mug. But if you happen to have your last nickel with you, you can bet it that Professor Backstrap never attempted to show the lads how to kick a foot-ball after that, not any.

He limped around the school-room the next day, and smelled awfully strong of liniment; but, although he got mad several times, he did not attempt to flog any of the boys.

It was only a few days after this occurrence that Bob and some of the fellows who were out in the woods started a skunk, who darted into his hole near at hand, leaving odor enough behind to be smelled a mile away.

Bob instantly thought of some fun he could have with that essence peddler, and so he at once went to his friend Screwjack, the carpenter, and had him make him a box trap.

"He set the trap and caught the skunk.
And oh, Lord Moses! how he stunk."

On the following night he and Joe Bimm took trap and all and stealthily placed it behind some bushes which grew under Backstrap's window, and then, giving it a kick to stir the animal up, they made tracks for their room.

The stink had nearly choked them, and they had so much of it about their clothing that they hung their suits out of the window to air during the remainder of the night.

Backstrap had gone to bed, and had just fallen into a doze; that is, he hadn't commenced to snore yet. The effluvia of that enraged pole-cat arose good and strong from the trap under the window.

Backstrap got a snoot full of it, which caused him to awaken and leap out of bed.

"Dunder und blitzen!" he exclaimed, "vot vos dot? Whew! by chimminy, dot vos some queer shmeil, don'd id?" and he grasped his nose to choke it off, evidently thinking it had had enough.

But it came in at the window so thick and fast that he could not only smell but taste it. He rushed to the window and pat his head out. There he got a full dose of it, and it nearly knocked him down.

With a roar, a grunt and a sudden retreat, he slammed down the window.

"Dunder und blitzen!" he muttered, "dot vos a skunk. He vos hite rount here somewhere und sdeal mine chickens. Oh, no, I guess me nod dot if you bleasle!" said he, seizing his double-barrel shot-gnn, the same one he used to shoot the dummy robin with, and, seeing that both barrels were loaded, he pulled on his pantaloons, and then stole softly out of the house.

CHAPTER XI.

You remember the skunk which Bob Rollick and Joe Bimm placed under the window of Professor Backstrap's room, secured in the box-trap in which they had caught it.

The professor stood the smell as long as he could, and thinking that the animal was hiding or skulking around in search of his chickens, he seized his gun and rushed out of doors to hunt for him.

That skunk was attending strictly to business, and everybody in the neighborhood knew it.

Backstrap stole softly around the corner of his house, looking here and there—for it is almost impossible to locate one of these perfumers—hoping to be able to give him a charge of shot at short range.

"Whew! Mine gracious, how he stinks!" he muttered. "I guess dere vos 'boud fidfy skunks here somewhere. Phew! dot vos vorser dan Limberger! Vere he vos, I guess? Poh! I dinks dot it comes der thickest right here," he mused,

looking toward the spot where the box-trap was concealed under the window.

He didn't like that style of game very much, but not getting sight of it, he concluded to blaze away into the bushes in the hope of hitting it by chance, and in any event driving him away.

He fired, and as luck would have it, some of the shot went through the trap and hit Mr. Skunk, who thereupon got madder yet and turned on an extra jet of his offensive cologne.

"Oh, py tam—oh, py tam!" he cried, a moment afterwards, holding his nose between his thumb and finger, and dancing around like a lunatic. "Dot vos vusser und more of id. Gid out! I vants no more of dot rose-wasser. Whew!"

But all his calling and dancing did not abate the smell in the least, and so he concluded to send in the other barrel and see if that would mend matters any.

Bob and Joe were looking from their window when he fired both the first and the second shot, and as they could hear his mutterings, they nearly laughed themselves into the colic.

But if anything, the second shot made things worse than before, for Mr. Skunk was unceremoniously tipped over by the charge of shot that struck the box in which he was confined, and as the box flew open when it overturned, the skunk flew out and made a dive for liberty and safety.

Professor Backstrap espied him as he darted out of the bushes across the path, and without stopping to think what the consequences would be, he made a dash for him, intending to knock him out of time with one blow from the butt of his gun.

"Py dunder!" he cried, as he made a blow at the skunk just as he was disappearing into the shrubbery.

He didn't hit the beast, but he came so very near to it that the beast hit him—with a stream of cologne which nearly blinded him.

"Dunder und blitzen!" he yelled, and made another strike somewhere in the direction he supposed his tormentor to be, but in his blind fury he tripped and went sprawling on the grass.

He had some difficulty in getting upon his feet again, but he had none at all in giving vent to his feelings. The air was blue in at least two languages as he let forth his mixed and broken oaths.

But he concluded that he had got all he wanted of that business, and picking up his gun, he made his way back again into the house, where he once more broke out afresh, cursing everything and everybody on top of the earth.

This, however, did not abate the smell at all, and so he started for his bath-room, hoping, if not believing, that soap and water would relieve him of his torment.

Bob and Joe laughed until they could do so no more, and finally went to bed, although the smell left behind by the skunk was so strong that they could not sleep. The fact was, they were getting a little of the same dose they had been treating the professor to.

Nor were they alone by any means, for soon after Backstrap fired his first shot, which awakened several of the other boys, they began to "whew!" and to ask what blooming idiot it was that had been shooting a skunk.

The second shot convinced them that it was the old man Backstrap, and then they laughed and looked from their windows, not to get any more of the smell, but to see how he was getting along with it.

They couldn't see him, but they could hear him swear just the same, and so they enjoyed a hearty laugh, if they did have to smell the dreadful stink while doing so.

Meanwhile Backstrap was scouring and scrubbing himself in his bath, but it seemed as though the more he scrubbed the "louder" the smell became, until finally he became utterly disgusted.

"Der tuyful is in dot sdink, und I bade dot id nefer go avay from me," he mused. "I vish dot I hafe me some Limburger cheese, of dot strong kind, but I bade it vould hafe no show alongside dot skunk. Vot shall I do mit minefself? I sdink so pade dat I vos mad mit minefself. Ah! I know vot I vill do; I vill dake me some goot drink schnapps und go to ped, und

pimepy I vake up in der morning und forged aboud id," said he, and acting on the impulse, he went back to his sleeping-room and took a big horn of gin that was enough to put a mule asleep.

This ended the business for the night, and although the smell still remained in wholesale quantities, which kept the boys "whewin'" and coughing all night, yet Backstrap slept the sleep of the just—just full enough to forget.

"You may break, you may shatter the vase if you will,
The scent of the roses will cling around it still."

Tom Moore didn't have a skunk in a box-trap in his mind when he wrote that couplet.

True, the trap was broken and shattered, and there was a scent clinging to it, but it wasn't the scent of roses exactly.

The first or arising bell whanged for several moments before the sound got a whack on the ear-drum of Professor Backstrap, and he opened his eyes.

The smell was there yet, and almost as pungent as ever. He bounced out of bed and looked sadly around. He had slept soundly by the aid of gin, but he instantly remembered everything.

"He's here yet," he growled; and seizing his clothes, he began to get into them. But it seemed as though a veritable skunk was hidden in them, so loud was the smell. Indeed, it almost made him gag.

"Dot vos a tam shame," he expostulated.
"Dot clothes vos sphoil. Vot shall I do?"

He finally concluded to put them on, and go out for his regular before-breakfast walk, in the hope that the smell would blow away, and after getting dressed, he went out.

Then Joe Bimm stole to the place and recovered the box-trap, loud with fragrance, and threw it away into a hedge where it was not likely it would be found.

But Backstrap couldn't walk away from that smell which surrounded him, and as he walked he met a farmer going to market.

"Say, yu, stranger, whar's that skunk?" he asked, holding his nose.

"Go on mit yourself und your skunk. I hafe noddings to do mit dem dings," said Backstrap, manifesting some impatience.

"Git out! I'll bet yu've got a skunk in yer pocket, an' I think it's a cat."

"He! vot vos dot?" demanded Backstrap, as he grasped his cane in a wicked way.

"Fact. I never knew a Dutchman yet that know'd a skunk from a cat—whew! Go 'long, or yer'll make my old hoss sick!"

"Dunder und blitzen, sir, I would hafe—"

"Oh, p'raps yer'd have some sauer krout to go with yer skunk! Go 'long!" he added, giving his old horse a crack. "Yer may like that sort of essence, but I don't want any. Good-bye, ole Limberger!" and he drove on, laughing heartily, while Backstrap was mad enough to dance.

"Hey, come pack here!" he cried, shaking his cane threateningly at him. "Come pack, und I gife you some skunk, I bade you!"

"No, keep it all yerself, ole Limberger!" cried the farmer, laughing, and driving on.

"Come pack und I preak your heat l!" yelled the exasperated professor, but the farmer only laughed the louder, and finished up by placing his thumb to his nose and wiggling his fingers.

The old man danced and flourished himself around in the road, shaking his cane wildly, and finally yelling after his tormentor that he would give him five dollars if he would only come back and allow him to have some fun with him for about two minutes—but a loud laugh in the distance was the only reply, and then the old fellow continued his walk, muttering and growling like a dog with a sore head.

The boys, of course, had a great deal to say about the skunk adventure, but not a soul of them knew all about it but Bob Rollick and Joe Bimm.

Backstrap was on hand for breakfast, and the skunk stink was with him. He was looking as savage as a battle-ax, for his meeting with the farmer had not made him feel a whit more like a Christian.

The fellows indulged in grins, although they

kept quiet until Skinny Pearse, unable to stand it any longer, said, "Phew!"

"Vot vos dot?" exclaimed Backstrap, looking down the length of the table.

"Phew!" "Whew!" "Shew!" and half a dozen other exclamations answered him.

"Who make dot pew?" he exclaimed savagely.

"The skunk!" cried three or four.

"Yaw, und I bade you dot I make some schmell vusser dan dot pimepy," said he, at which the boys laughed in spite of themselves.

In an instant he saw the manner in which he had spoken, and for which he could not find it in his heart—ugly though it was—to flog them, and then he attempted to mend the speech.

"Stop dot lafin! Vot I vos say is dot I make a sdink mit some poys as lase ad dot skunk. Dot skunk vos all righd. Ead you preakfust, und esry bottom stand on ids own tub," said he, endeavoring to straighten himself out.

But so badly did he succeed in doing this that he increased the laughter instead of stopping it. Before breakfast was finished he had promised to flog at least ten of the boys who could not, to save their lives, keep from laughing, not only at his blunders in speaking, but at the ridiculous figure he cut and the loudness of his smell.

After breakfast they continued their laugh and talked over what they had seen the night before, and this lasted them up to school time, when they all answered the bell.

But there was little or no prospect of there being a quiet, sober time, for the professor brought in the smell with him almost as strong as ever, and it filled the school-room.

Of course somebody said "Phew!" and then the old man went for them. At least six of them bent over that stool of repentance and retired to their seats in a better condition to stand up than to sit down.

Backstrap attempted to go on with the lessons of the day, but the fragrance of that skunk was too much for study, and after wasting about an hour, he finally dismissed school and told the boys they could have a holiday, which of course delighted them.

Then he went to work and buried his clothes in the earth so as to rid them of the smell, and by the next morning everything was all right again and school went on as usual.

And so our friend Bob Rollick got out of another snap without being once suspected, and it did seem as though there was some charm about him which enabled him to steer clear of the very troubles which so frequently overwhelmed other fellows in the school.

In addition to this, Miss Gnarley received from Professor Backstrap the most flattering reports of Bob's progress, which of course sent him up in her estimation higher than ever, as did the letters which he wrote her every week, so that she never for a moment suspected that he was the most mischievous fellow there was in Backstrap's school.

In truth, there was more fun to the square inch in that school than in any other little spot on the earth, for in addition to the scrapes and rackets which I have narrated here for the edification and pleasure of the bright, smart, appreciative readers of THE WIDE AWAKE LIBRARY, there was something continually happening.

Nor was Bob Rollick the only rogue in school by any manner of means; but he differed from the others in this, that he worked his jokes and snaps in such an artful way that he was never suspected; not even "hardly ever."

There was a good thing happened about a week after the skunk racket; something that owed its origin to Bob Rollick, and in which Professor Backstrap was again the victim. Bob would have let the old man alone more than he did had he not been forever flogging his chum, Joe Bimm. Joe was one of the truest and best fellows in the world, and Bob liked him better than any other person he had ever seen; but he was one of those unlucky fellows who are sure to get caught at any mischief he might attempt, if he did not follow Bob's instructions.

The consequence was Joe was forever getting a basting. Indeed, scarcely a day passed in

which he did not have to bend over Backstrap's stool of repentance, because of being caught at some of his monkey business. And as Bob did not like this any more than Joe did, he thought of playing things on the old man sooner than any one else.

Bob had noticed that Backstrap was greatly annoyed by cats lately, on account of two or three new ones who had taken up their abode on the premises; for they improved the moonlight nights by holding conventions and having concerts about the locality.

And what seemed strange, they seemed to take special delight in getting upon a fence that stood only a rod or two from the professor's window, and there holding blood-curdling arguments or challenging each other to mortal combat.

Backstrap had sent one of these tormentors to the feline kingdom come with his shot-gun; but this tragedy did not prove a permanent warning to the others, for they still kept up their wrangles and nearly drove the old man wild.

"I'm going to have some fun with his nibs to-night," said Bob to Joe.

"How?" Joe asked eagerly.

"See this?" asked Bob, going to the closet and bringing out a sheet-iron cat.

"What the deuce is that?"

"What does it look like?" asked he, holding it up.

"Well, as much like a cat as anything."

"That's it, a profile cat, made of sheet-iron."

"But where the dickens did you get it?"

"I had it made the other day when I was down to the village. Now I'll show you how the old cat works. Come along," said he, taking the "cat" under his arm and leading the way down-stairs.

For the life of him Joe could not even guess what Bob intended to do with it, but that there would come some sort of fun out of the business he felt confident, and so he asked no further questions, but followed his chum.

It was a bright moonlight night and about ten o'clock. The air was soft and balmy, and the fragrance of ripening fruit nestled into every breath, delighting and half intoxicating every one dwelling within the charmed circle.

Bob stole along in the shadow of some trees and shrubbery until he reached a spot outside of the fence before mentioned, where he stopped and looked carefully up to the window of the professor's room. It was dark and the old man evidently in bed, asleep.

Reaching up Bob fixed the sheet-iron dummy of the cat to the top of the fence, fastening it there with two screws which had been provided, and only needed turning in with the thumb and finger, so when it was fastened, the whole form of the cat stood up above the top of the fence and looked for all the world like a genuine feline.

"Now, then," said Bob, in a whisper, "we must imitate two cats fighting."

"Oh, I can double discount a fifty-pound tom-cat at that business," replied Joe.

"All right, go ahead."

And Joe did go ahead, imitating a cat on a back fence hurrah so naturally, that all the cats around the place began to yowl and to assemble around the spot.

Bob put in some of his fine work in answering Joe, and the result was that as fine a cat riot as ever was heard.

Professor Backstrap heard it, and had no doubt but that his tormentors were around again. But he tried to ignore them and go to sleep in spite of their wauling, but he could not do so.

Finally he got up and struck a light, after which he went to the window and looked out upon the scene of the ruction.

"Scad out!" he yelled.

"Meu—yeu—wou—chou!" put in Joe, and Bob answered him in tones quite as loud and belligerent.

"Scad out ose dot!" the professor called again, with a like result, and his eyes fell on the sheet-iron cat. "Ha! I bade you dot I knock some stuffings out puddy gwick," and he searched around his room for something to throw that would demolish that presumptuous

feline, and finding nothing better, he threw a big Latin book, but without hitting the mark.

"Wow—whow—bow—yeow!"

"Scad out, or I preaks you into some pieces puddy gwick!" he yelled again.

But that cat didn't "scat" worth a pin.

The old fellow then hurled an inkstand, which hit the fence with a thud on the opposite side to where the jokers were standing.

"Gott in himmel!" he finally vociferated, "I bade you dot I knock you out—ose dot," said he, and seizing his gun, he took deliberate aim and fired.

But of course that cat, although hit in at least twenty places, and bent somewhat where the shot did not go through, didn't take a tumble, and to show defiance, the boys began again their cat-er-wauling, which exasperated the professor beyond endurance.

Lifting his gun again and pointing it out of the window, he fired the second barrel at the supposed cat; but after the smoke cleared away, he saw her just the same as before in the moonlight, and heard the boys over on the other side of the fence imitating cats who were on the point of fighting.

This was more than the old fellow could stand, and thinking that perhaps he had not a sufficient charge of powder to his gun, he proceeded to reload it with a double charge, bound to kill the cat or die trying to.

The boys kept up the racket, and after the old man had given his gun the big charge, they saw him again shove it out of the window and take aim.

But as the yowling was high at this time, he seemed suddenly to change his mind, and pulling back the hammers of both barrels, he let them go at once, making a tremendous report and riddling that sheet-iron cat like a sieve.

But in the meantime where was Backstrap?

If anybody had been in the room at the time, they would have known all about it.

The overcharged gun kicked like a mule, and Backstrap was knocked over backwards, and landed under his bed, where the boys heard him yelling like a stuck pig.

"Come on, Joe," whispered Bob, and he led the way back to their room as quickly as possible; running up-stairs without their shoes.

It was some moments before Backstrap recovered his scattered senses, and then he crawled slowly out from under the bed, and glanced anxiously around. There lay his smoking gun, from which he understood it all.

Going to the window, he saw the cat in the same place, although somewhat bent and thoroughly riddled with shot.

He took a tumble, suspecting that there was a sell somewhere, especially as there was no more cat noises; and so, putting on his trousers and slippers, he went out to investigate that mysterious cat.

Pulling it down from the fence with some difficulty, he took a look at it.

CHAPTER XII.

"MOLY HOSES!" exclaimed Backstrap, as he examined the sheet-iron cat which he had riddled with shot, and which Cob Rollick had placed on the back fence to torment him, "vot vos dot? Dot vos funny, py tunder," and he took the riddled dummy into the house.

"Dot vos so queer," he mused, as he held the riddled feline up between him and the light. "Dem cad nefer make no 'meow' goot'nough, und I vonder me how id vos somehow? Ha! I bade me dot some of dem poys pud dot iron cad ub py dot fence to fool dem oder cads!" and he laughed most heartily over the way those other cats had been deceived, and how they had yowled at the sheet-iron dummy, never, up to this moment, suspecting that he was the individual fooled.

But after thinking it over a while longer, he sort of half tumbled that this sheet-iron cat had been put up to fool him. At all events, he had been fooled into firing three or four charges of shot at it, and the second discharge of both barrels at once—loaded with an extra charge—had kicked him over most unceremoniously.

"Yaw, py tam, dot vos so," he mused. "I vos der bardy dot vos foot. I vonder me who

vos dem poys dot mage dot funny pizness mit me? Oh, I bade you!" and as the thing broke more and more upon him, he began to dance around the room like a wild man, shaking his fat fist at some imaginary individual.

"I vos so met! Dot skunk vos pad 'nough, but dem cad vos—der vorse. Oh, py tunder, I make somebody jumb skip, I bade you;" and chucking the dummy out of the window, he blew out the light, and returned growlingly to bed.

But not to sleep. The joke upon him rankled in his heart, and the more he thought about the different mishaps that had bothered him of late, the more he thought that there must surely be some sly and artful cuss among his scholars who was continually putting up jobs upon him.

Yet the question was, how was he to find out whether his suspicions were true or not, and who this artful dodger was.

Just before going to sleep, however, he made up his mind what he would do. He would make a confidant of Bob Rollick, the model boy of his school, as he believed, tell him of his suspicions, show him the sheet-iron cat, and also the box-trap in which the skunk had been caught, and which Soggy, the gardener, had found a few days after the stinking adventure (and which gave everything away except the names of the jokers), and make him a sort of general monitor or detective, believing that he could certainly find out who the author of the mischief was.

With this he fell asleep, and about an hour afterwards Bob Rollick stole out to see what had been done with his dummy, and finding it under the old man's window, he knew that he had detached it from the fence, and probably had found out all about the sell that had been played upon him, even if he did not know who it was that played it.

Hastily snatching it up, he stole away behind the shrubbery, and made his way down to the dock, where he threw it into the water.

"That drowns the 'cat,' at all events; now to get back to bed," said he.

Nothing further happened that night, only Bob was fearfully sleepy the next morning, and hated dreadfully to get up when the rising-bell rang, as did his chum, Joe Bimm. But they put in an appearance at breakfast with the other boys, all the same.

There was a cloud on Backstrap's brow, and Bob thought he knew why it was there, but he did not know all about it, for the old man had been hunting around under his window for that sheet-iron cat, and not finding it, had given him another subject to think about.

But what to make of it he did not know. Could it be possible that some outsiders had done the business, after all? At all events, he resolved to make a detective of Bob Rollick, in the hope of finding out all about it.

So he sent for him to come to his room after breakfast, greatly to the astonishment of Bob and Joe Bimm.

"Holy smoke!" whispered Bob. "What is up now, I wonder?"

"I'll bet he suspects," said Joe.

"Maybe he does, but I can chin him out of it," mused Bob.

"Do you suppose the old rat saw us?"

"No; for we were behind the fence; but he might have spotted me when I went out afterward to find the cat."

"It is the cat—it is the cat!" whispered Joe, quoting from a certain opera, which would have subjected him to a thumping under any other circumstances.

"Never mind; I'll go and see," said Bob, starting for the professor's room, while Joe waited with a palpitating heart.

The professor received Bob smilingly, and instantly he knew that he was not suspected.

"Dook a sead mit me," said Backstrap, pointing to a chair.

"Thank you," said Bob, mildly.

"Master Rollick, I hate somedings to say mit you," said he, wheeling around in his chair.

"Indeed?" and Bob smiled blandly.

"Yaw, py tam, dot vos so?" he mused.

"Guns? Well, now you speak of it, I think

I was wakened last night by the report of a gun."

"Dot vos me."

"You?"

"You know dem cads?"

"Yes, sir; I often hear them."

"Vell, lasd nighd dem cads make hale aroundt dis blace. I dry me some sleep, bud no, dot squall vos too much mit me all der time, und so pimepy puddy quick I dakes mine gun und go mit dot window owit, und fire ad von ofe dem dot I see on dot fence already, bud she no gid avay chush like noddings ad all. Und den I get me *met* und fire some more, und some more dot cad didn't come down ofe dot fence. Den I get me some more met as plazes, und I go me owit to see vot dot vos all aboud, und vot you dink?"

"I am sure I cannot even guess, sir," said Bob, manifesting much honest curiosity.

"Dot cad vos *nod* a cad!" said he, slapping his fat leg earnestly.

"What is that you say, sir?"

"It vos sheed iron, chusd like a cad, but it vos no cad."

"What an idea—I never heard of such a thing."

"Dot vos vot make id so gweer to me."

"Where is it now, sir?"

"Dot vos some more gweer dings. I pring dot cad, dot vos not a cad, der room in, und I look me at id; den I throw id dot vindow owit, bud id vos nod there dis morning!" said he, opening his eyes very wide.

"Not therel! That is very strange, sir," said Bob, going to the window and looking out.

Did you ever hear of such a cool rascal?

"Yaw, dot vos der gweerest dings dot I efer seen all der dime. Now, vot you dink?"

"I scarcely know what to think, sir."

"Dot cad vos iron."

"Yes, sir."

"Dot cad vos make full ofe holes py dot gun—dot cad could not walk away."

"That is very evident, sir."

"Somebody put dot cad on dot fence to blay some funny pizness mit me."

"It certainly looks like it, sir," said Bob, looking honest and earnest.

"Now, I spoke some dings mit you. Liddle vile ago you mint dot skunk?"

"Yes, I remember it very well."

"Dot vos some more funny pizness."

"Do you think so, sir?"

"Dot vos all righd, I know id vos a *choke*."

"Yes, sir; very choking," replied Bob, who could not help playing upon the word as the old man pronounced it, although he still looked honest.

"I mean a *choke*," he repeated.

"Yes, sir."

"I mean it vos a *choke*—some funny pizness."

"Oh! What makes you think so, sir?"

"Shoggy he fint dot pox-drab where dot skunk vos cotch und pud under mine vindow owit, und I know dot id vos some funny pizness py somebody."

"Do you really think so, sir?"

"I vos so sure as noddings boud id, und now I dinks me dot some poy in der school makes dot funny pizness, hey?"

"It doesn't seem possible, sir."

"I vos sure of id. Now I make you mine confidant und my detective."

"I am much obliged to you for your confidence in me, but do you think I can succeed, sir?" asked Bob, only for a moment taken aback.

"Dot vos all righd. I drust you to fint owit ife you can. It must be some poys in mine school or somebody owit."

"But I shall be obliged to have more liberty than I now have," suggested Bob, meekly.

"Dot vos all righd some more. I make dot all righd mit you; only fint owit who vos dem tuyfls as make dem funny pizness."

"I will do my best, sir."

"Dot vos all I ask, Masder Ropert. Geep gwiet all der vile und say noddings boud id, und I bade you dot you fint owit."

"Very well, sir," replied Bob, bowing and walking out of the room.

Joe Bimm was, of course, anxious to know what the racket was, and so he kept watch for

Bob to find out. He saw him leave the room of the professor and run toward the barn.

Joe followed him, of course.

He found him in the barn, laughing and pounding himself, literally "clubbing" himself, for some reason or other.

Joe stopped and looked at him in amazement.

"Bob!" he called, but he did not notice him.

"Bob—Bob! what's the matter?"

"Halloo, Joe!" and he commenced to dance a breakdown on the floor.

"What the deuce is the matter?"

"Whew! Holy Moses!" said Bob, pausing.

"What about Moses—what about Backstrap?"

"Whew!"

"Tell us; what is it?" persisted Joe.

"The biggest racket you ever knew, Joe."

"How—what is it?"

"Joe, what do you think?"

"Give it up. Did he tumble?"

"Nixy, Joe."

"Well, what did he do?"

"He thinks somebody played a trick on him last night in regard to that sheet-iron cat."

"The suspicious old fool!" exclaimed Joe.

"And he has got the gall to say that somebody played a skunk act on him."

"The old idiot! Well?"

"He suspects some of the scholars."

"The old fool!"

"Well, he has made a detective of me, and told me to find out who is playing those tricks on him."

"The deuce!"

"Fact!"

Then Joe began to dance, and, in fact, they had a regular little circus there while laughing and talking over the absurdity of the thing. But while thus engaged the school-bell rang, and they started forth to answer it.

"Now don't you forget it, Joe, we will have more fun with his nibs than ever. Just you keep mum and watch how the old thing works."

"All right. It's the bulliest thing I ever heard of in my life," replied Joe, and together they joined with the other fellows and marched into the school-room, looking just as innocent as ever, seeing that they had their laugh out, and Backstrap was there, looking even smiling.

Well, everything went off pleasantly that day, and nothing happened to mar the regular course of events. Bob and Joe, of course, had the cream of the laugh to themselves, and they were not at all inclined to give it away; but Joe admitted (it would do for him to admit, seeing that he was not a detective) that the old man had been terribly fooled the night before by somebody who worked a dummy cat on him.

Indeed, he told nearly the whole story, although of course he did not give away the authors of the joke, and the result was that nearly all of the boys were laughing at the expense of the old professor who had shot the sheet-iron cat.

But although they could not find out who had worked the snap, they of course believed that it was no other than Bob Rollick, the prince and originator of nearly all the fun in school. But they did not find out that Bob had been made a detective, for that would have spoiled all.

Professor Backstrap felt happy, because he knew that Bob was an exceptionally keen boy, and that in all probability he would find out who the rogues of the school were, and that he should before long have the great satisfaction of belaboring them just as he wanted to. Whew!

A week passed without anything new being turned up, although it must be understood that the boys were having their fun all the while, just as they always did; that was an everyday matter.

But by this time the autumn began to creep along with her shoulders laden with fruit, and the farm connected with Professor Backstrap's school was as prolific as any in the land.

In one thing, however, it showed better than ever, and that was the matter of apples; he had many more than he knew what to do with.

On the place there was a little old-fashioned cider-mill, that had not been used for many years, and, seeing that he had so many apples, Backstrap concluded to utilize that mill and

make some cider. Sweet cider was all right; it certainly could not affect him as the College Point beer had. Indeed, it was what might be called a girl's drink.

So he ordered Soggy to gather apples enough to make about a barrel of it, and at the same time he made up his mind to have a regular old German festival, after it had been first pressed from the apples; a sort of harvest-home festival that they make so much of in the old country; and this resolution he gave the boys notice of.

Bob Rollick winked at Joe Bimm.

Joe Bimm tumbled to something that was up, and winked back again.

"Mum!"

"What?"

"Job."

"Big!"

"You bet."

"Whew!"

"Cider."

"The festival?"

"Cert. Mum!"

"Of course."

This was all that passed between them just then, but that night Bob unfolded his plans to his chum, and they laughed long and heartily as they talked over the possibilities and probabilities which might arise.

Now the professor had evidently set his heart upon this festival, for it compared exactly with one of the same kind that he used to celebrate in his youth in "Faderland."

True enough, the apple-trees were humpbacked with the burden of their fruit, and after selecting the best to keep over winter, Soggy hauled enough to the old mill to make at least a gallon of cider.

The boys were delighted, of course, and great expectations were awakened regarding the sweet-juiced hurrah which had been promised them.

Finally one day Soggy began to grind up the apples, and all the time they could get from school they watched him, although, of course, they managed to play a good many good-natured tricks upon him, all of which he took in good part, as he always did.

The next day he began to press the mashed apples under the big screw, and the juice began to trickle out in an amber stream, and to run into a barrel that had been placed to catch it.

It was lots of fun for the boys, as it was for Professor Backstrap, who watched the operation with old-time delight whenever his duties would allow him to do so, and he would occasionally taste of it to make sure it was all right.

Of course it was. Who ever knew the juice of apples freshly pressed that was not all right?

"Dot vos some negtar dot Jupiter sibs!" said he, after drinking about a quart of it.

The boys also managed to get in for a snootful now and then, although he assured them that if they let it alone now they should have all they wanted the next day, which was Saturday afternoon, when he proposed to have his little harvest home festival.

Now about here is where Bob Rollick came in with his fine work, and that night after dark he and Joe Bimm went to the village on the sly, and they returned about midnight with a big demijohn between them.

The demijohn contained some old New Jersey apple-jack, about two gallons of it, which Bob had bought at the village store, and which contained energy enough to set a whole regiment of Jerseymen drunk.

Making sure that everybody about the place was asleep, they made their way softly and stealthily toward the cider mill, where the barrel of sweet juice stood pressed from beneath the ponderous screw.

Lifting up the cover, they poured the contents of the demijohn into the cider, and then taking a stick, Bob stirred it earnestly for some minutes, after which they retired quietly to bed, and in whispers talked over the prospects of the Harvest Home.

The next day being Saturday, Backstrap was more than commonly lenient toward his scholars, and before noon he had explained to them the true significance of the Harvest Home, which was made so much of in Germany and other portions of Europe.

Unbeknown to them, he had invited about a dozen of his friends, male and female, together with two or three pieces of music, for what does a German enjoy without music?

At about three o'clock in the afternoon these invited guests began to arrive, and Backstrap made them comfortable on chairs which had been placed around the cider mill, which was the center of interest in a festival like this.

The boys of his school were also gathered, and their eyes were gladdened by a table heavily laden with all the fruits of autumn, together with confections of different kinds, all of which was to be washed down by the sweet cider which had been pressed from the apples grown upon his farm.

The music swelled and the fruit was passed around among the scholars and guests. Even the musicians came in for some, and then, after a speech in German, which Backstrap made to his guests, he invited them all to gather around the barrel of sweet cider and drink their fill.

"Did you ever know a German who did not respond to such an invitation?"

They gathered around like flies, and the scholars jumped in wherever there was an opening, with the exception of Bob and Joe, and during the next fifteen minutes that barrel of cider was half ladled and drank.

It was delicious, and some of the professor's guests went so far as to insist upon it that there was apple-jack in it. At all events, the apples grown upon his farm must be the best and the strongest they had ever seen.

The effect upon all hands was marvelous, and of course a dance was proposed. The musicians began to feel quite as well as the guests did, and they furnished the liveliest sort of music which they all went for in the liveliest manner.

Backstrap seized one of the females and tried to waltz with her, but he tumbled over her, and they both went to grass together. The woman's husband objected, and instantly there was a babel of voices, all in German, and then coats were thrown off and everybody seemed to be demanding satisfaction.

Even the boys were feeling the effects of the apple-jack, and were raising mischief among each other. Backstrap tried to restore order and to assure his friends that they had only partaken of sweet cider, but the more he protested, the more noisy did they become.

CHAPTER XIII.

Such a hurrah as that apple-jack, placed in that barrel of sweet cider, had turned that Harvest Home of Backstrap's into, you can scarcely conceive of. Whoop!

His guests tried to dance, but the copious draughts of cider had worked upon them to such an extent that they could scarcely stand upon their feet, let alone dancing with them.

Everybody but Bob Rollick and Joe Bimm appeared to be drunk, both Backstrap's guests and the pupils of his school, and so far as the old man himself was concerned, he was what people call "full as a goat." He wanted to do something.

He had started out to have a regular old-fashioned German Harvest Home, provided with music and refreshments, which was to be washed down by the product of his cider-mill. But Bob Rollick—the boy whom he had chosen for a detective to find out who the rogues were who had been playing all the jokes on him—had put two gallons of apple-jack into the barrel of new cider, and the result was that everybody who drank of it got speedily drunk.

Oh, what a sight it was!

Some of them were laughing, some were trying to dance—and they made out quite as well as the musicians who furnished the music—some wanted to fight over imaginary insults, and others kept on sampling that sweet cider.

"Dot vos some pully cider, I bade you!" said he, trying to balance himself.

"Yaw—Yaw!" cried some of his friends.

And it must have been discordant cider, for one of the musicians was sawing away at the "Blue Danube Waltz," another was tooting something that belonged to "Yankee Doodle," while still another was trying to make "The Star Spangled Banner" acceptable.

Indeed, it was the worst mix up that was ever

seen anywhere, and of course it was great fun for the boys, especially Bob Rollick and Joe Bimm, who, in order to carry out the racket, made believe that they were also drunk.

"Never sheen sush bully time?" said Skinny Pearse, scarcely able to stand.

"Good for old Backstrap!" said Bill Cortland, and nearly all of them expressed themselves in his favor for the cider and festival, although it resembled an orgie more than it did a harvest home.

But one by one they began to drop out and go to their beds. They didn't want any more sweet cider in theirs, although some of them stuck it out, and played all sorts of tricks on the others, who fell by the wayside, discouraged, so to speak."

Meanwhile Backstrap and his guests were cutting up all sorts of dodos, setting examples for the boys, which they were not slow to follow.

After partaking of more cider all around, Backstrap concluded that he would finish that waltz with Mrs. Hassleheimer, and ordering the musicians to wrestle with "The Blue Danube," he seized his fat partner around the waist.

But those musicians, "dot liddle Cherman pand," were mixed worse than ever by this time, and they played a little of everything and everything out of time and tune.

Backstrap and his partner tried to dance, but they made out so badly that they stopped and yelled in Dutch at the players, calling all sorts of names, and asking what it was they were trying to give them.

"Yaw; vot vos dot anyhow, sometimes?"

"Oh, come on!" said his impatient partner, seizing him again.

"Dot vos nein goot," he protested.

"You vos nein goot," she retorted, and trying to whirl him into the dance again, she stepped on his big foot, and that tripped them both up and down they went.

And how they both jabbered and swore at each other in Dutch. But finally, while he was trying to get up, she got a twist on him, and flinging him over upon his back, proceeded to give him a good pummeling.

Of course he yelled murder in both English and German, and probably a little in both languages, and when her husband attempted to pull her off, she got up and whalloped him.

Oh, it was a bushel of fun for everybody but Backstrap and the other fellow.

They all jabbered like so many wild Indians, and this burst up that Harvest Home, for by this time they were all mad and ready for a fight. The Chinese lanterns were pulled down and thrown into that open barrel of cider, as was the grub and several hats, Backstrap's among the others. Indeed, they rammed everything they could get hold of into the barrel, as though fully resolved on making a diabolical punch.

One of Backstrap's eyes was closed, but that didn't bother him much, for there were no lights to assist it, and he was otherwise badly broken up.

In ten minutes the last of his guests had gone, and two of the musicians were fast asleep under one of the demolished tables, one of them having a pumpkin pie smashed over his face, and the other was slumbering sweetly with his head inside of a bass fiddle.

Of course the boys had skedaddled, and poor old Backstrap must indeed have felt—

"—like one who stood alone
In some banquet hall deserted,
Whose lights have fled, whose garlands dead.
And all but him departed."

Sorrowfully, but with many a curse, he made his way to his room to get a look at himself and to try and collect his thoughts. But a sight of himself soon knocked his already-confused thoughts into a worse confusion than they were before, and he fell back into a chair, still regarding himself in the mirror.

"Gott in Himmel!" he gasped, "dot vos a puldy biece auf pizness? How vos dot like anyvay?"

But the conundrum was too much for him just then, and he gave it up. How he and his friends should chance to get into such a condition by drinking a little harmless sweet cider, he could not make out; so he proceeded to wash him-

self, for the treatment he had received had sobered him considerably.

Finally he tumbled into bed and was soon asleep, as were everybody about the place, with the exception of that arch rogue, Bob Rollick, and his pal, Joe Bimm. They were still looking around in the dark to see if there was any more fun to be had.

Finding that Soggy was as drunk and as fast asleep as any of them, they stole down to the pasture where the old horse, Potato Bug, was kept, and arousing him up, they led him out and up to the scene of the late Harvest Home and to that cider barrel, to see if he would drink.

But he did not seem inclined to at first, and so they left him alone to his own sweet will, and started for the room.

They actually went to bed without any more laughing, for the very good reason that they had already laughed so much that they were sore, and could only keep a painful grin.

But the others were asleep. Some of them had tumbled into it without a word, others had tumbled into bed with their clothes on, while others still had shouted and sung, or before finally shutting up for the night had played some joke on somebody else.

In fact, they had things their own way as long as they could keep up, but when that apple-jack and cider got in its work on them, they very soon found themselves asleep, as before stated.

There had been many inquiries for Bob Rollick during these scenes of going to bed and kicking up the high jinks, but for some reason or other he was not to be found; and some one of them sprinkled a few handfuls of gravel in his bed, just to remind him there were others who could play jokes as well as he, although he at once tumbled and shook the prickly stuff from his sheets, and then went quietly to sleep.

The rising bell had something to do the next morning to arouse everybody about the place. In fact, Soggy, whose duty it was to ring it, had overslept himself fully half an hour, and even then he felt so sleepy that he scarcely knew what he was about; and after pulling away at the rope for a few minutes he sat down in the corner of the entry to sleep until it should be time to ring the breakfast-bell.

Bob Rollick and Joe Bimm were of course the first ones up, and on looking from their window they saw the old horse, Potato Bug, staggering about the place the worst broken-up-looking old nag that ever was seen outside of a boneyard.

"I'll bet a thousand that he has been drinking some of that cider!" exclaimed Joe.

"Of course he has; horses love sweet cider, and he is as big a fool as the rest of 'em, and don't know that there was apple-jack mixed with it. See him stagger around—there he goes! Brace up, old man, and show your style!" said Bob.

"Hurry up, and get dressed, and we'll go out and see the fun," put in Joe, hurrying himself.

"You bet! Oh, isn't this a racket!"

They hurried down and out in the direction of the scene of last night's mishaps, but there they found Professor Backstrap, standing and looking at the drunken antics of his horse.

This calmed them down a bit, and they began to walk, as though out for a little exercise.

But the astonished old man did not see them. He couldn't see very well that morning at best, and what eyes he had for anything were directed to his horse. He had come out to see the extent of the damage that had been done the night before, when he discovered the strange conduct of Potato Bug.

"Moly Hoses!" they heard him mutter, as they approached him.

Well, it is no wonder he was astonished!

You remember the old horse Potato Bug, don't you, and the fun Bob Rollick had with him?

Of course you do, and you remember the picture our artist gave of him?

Well, now try and imagine a horse drunk!

Any horse drunk—but more especially that old bag of bones and homely angularities!

Can you build up such a picture? Can you catch on to such an absurdity?

Good, if you can, for it isn't everybody that is able to, but because such a thing is so strange, it is no reason why it is not true. This was a fact, and I have seen various animals drunk, and birds, too, for that matter, and at this moment I have a vivid recollection of what befell the middle portion of my body for getting a flock of geese drunk on some cherries which my father had been using to flavor a demijohn of brandy, and which I had found and given them.

Well, Potato Bug at first refused to drink out of the open barrel, as will be remembered, but after nosing around amid the ruins of the feast

"Queer? I dinks me dot horse has got some hydrophobia."

"Is it possible? Let's go closer to him."

"No; pimeby he bide you," said the professor.

"Oh, no; I think he is sick," said Bob.

"Sick? He acts more like he vos trunk!"

"Drunk? How could a horse get drunk?"

"How could everybody ged trunk last nighd?"

"It must have been the cider."

"Bud id vos sweet cider."

"Well; perhaps he has been drinking some of it," replied Bob, going nearer to the horse.

"Gum avay or he kill you!" shouted Backstrap, and just then some of the other scholars came up. "Oh, dot vos such queerness."

"He's all right, sir," said Bob.

"He's been drinking the cider," said Joe, at which the other fellows laughed and crowded around the drunken horse, cheering and shouting as they danced around with delight.

This was a continuation of last night's circus, or, perhaps, this might be called the menagerie part of it, and the boys at once forgot their own headaches in the face of more fun.

Backstrap joined in the crowd, but from sheer



The old umbrella turned wrong side out before he got half way down, and he landed with his bare legs in a clump of thorn bushes. He yelled bloody murder, and the boys rushed to his rescue.

for quite some time, he finally got thirsty, and went for the doctored cider.

That cider had "doctored" him, as it did the others who partook of it, and then he was "as drunk as a boiled owl."

He didn't understand the trouble, evidently, and although there is no knowing how he felt, whether as though he wanted to "whoop 'er up" and have some fun, he appeared to be exceedingly busy in trying to stand, and keep his legs from getting tangled up.

He would attempt to walk, and then suddenly halt and throw out his larboard or starboard legs to brace against falling, and then he would seem to reason with himself, and slowly gather himself up for another attempt.

Finally his hind legs got twisted together in some way, and he sat down on his haunches, but still bracing upon his fore legs.

It was this turn in the show that had caused Backstrap to utter an exclamation, which was just as Bob Rollick and Joe Bimm came up.

"Ah! what's the matter?" asked Bob, and the professor turned around.

"Is the horse sick?" asked Joe, innocently.

"Dot vos somedings dot I don'd understand," replied Backstrap, and puzzled he certainly was.

"He acts awfully queer," mused Bob.

"Bud who efer hear dot sweet cider make anypody trunk?"

"Well, I'm sure I don't know anything about that, sir, being brought up in the city, but I have always heard that it was as harmless as milk."

"Oh, mine Gott! dere vos some strange dings aboud dis place," said he, looking at Joe with his blackened and half-closed eye, which the young rogue was obliged to turn away from so as not to laugh in his face.

Meanwhile Bob had approached the horse and began to talk to him, and this gave the old man confidence, so that he also went near.

"Halloo, horsey! what's the matter with you? Are you sick? Let me help you up," he added, taking him by the forelock.

Potato Bug looked at him and winked one eye in such a comical way that Bob was forced to laugh in spite of himself.

"Come, old man, brace up," said Joe; and with a mighty effort the old nag struggled to his feet just about as a drunken man would have done.

This frightened Backstrap, and he ran back a few yards to make sure of being out of the way in case he had the hydrophobia.

"Steady there," cried Bob and Joe, as the old rackingbone floundered around and snorted.

astonishment, had but little to say. His mind was too full of the events of last night.

Meanwhile Bob Rollick was leading Potato Bug around, and calling on him to show what style he had in him.

And the old horse actually seemed to enjoy the racket. He had evidently been lonely after getting drunk, and yearned for companions; so he wobbled around, winked first one eye, and then the other, and wagged his ears, one at a time, in a most comical way.

Presently Backstrap braced up, and went to see if he could make out what the matter was with his "fiery, untamed steed."

"Sdrop dot foolishings!" he cried, taking the forelock from Bob's hand. "Vot ish der madder mit you somehow?"

"He's all right, sir," suggested Bob.

"Vot vos de madder mit his legs?"

"Guess he's tired," said Skinny Pearse, and the boys laughed some more.

"I dinks me dot he ish goin' ter die tead."

"Oh, no, he's all right."

"I pud him his misery owit mit some shot gun in his heat," protested Backstrap. "He haf somedings der madder mit him."

"What will you take for him, professor?" asked Bob Rollick, earnestly.

"Vot vos dot?" asked the old man, turning to Bob with an expression of astonishment.

"What will you take for him just as he stands?"

"Dot vos none ofe your pizness."

"But I would rather buy him than to see him shot," protested Bob, and the boys were quickly interested.

This appeared to touch the professor, and he was silent. Finally he asked, after looking at the unsteady steed for a moment:

"Vot vos dot you vant mit dot horse?"

"Well, I wouldn't like to see him killed, simply because he is broken up, and if you will sell him at a reasonable figure, I will buy him for myself."

"I gife you dot horse for dwenty tollars."

"All right; I'll take him at that," said Bob.

"Sdop a liddle. How boud dot saddle und dot pridle und dings?"

"How much for them?"

"Fifdy tollers; nod a cend less; how much you gife?"

"All right; I'll give you your price; I will pay for the horse and the boys will chip in and pay for the saddle and bridle. Then we can all take turns at horseback riding; eh, fellows?"

"Yes—yes, we'll chip in!" they cried.

"Chib in! Vot vos dot?" asked Backstrap, who had but a poor notion of the meaning of slang, as where is the German who does?

"That means that we will all pay something toward making up the sum," said Skinny Pearse, while Bob was winking around at the fellows.

"Ish dot so? All'd righd; you may chib in, und bay me sevendy tollars und dake der horse und oder dings. I vos glate to ged gone mit 'em."

"All right; Potato Bug is mine!" cried Bob, dancing up and taking the old nag by the forelock.

"Hey? Vot vos dot you say?" asked Backstrap, who had as yet never heard the name of Potato Bug, which Bob Rollick had bestowed upon his horse.

"Oh, that's the name I give him," replied Bob, and then the fellows all laughed, while Backstrap looked around from one to another.

"Bodado Pug? Oh, mine Crackey! Dot vos der funniesd name I efer hear! Bodado Pug!" and the old man actually laughed at the idea, but the shape of his mug as he did so was so comical, that the old horse actually appeared to join in the laugh which the boys set up.

They had all heard of things being comical enough to make a horse laugh, but this was the first time they had ever actually seen anything that seemed to cover the ground, and with a horse on the spot to make the saying good.

Backstrap laughed, because he thought they were laughing at the ridiculous name which Bob had given the horse, and because he had got, or would get, seventy dollars for an old nag that he would gladly have given to any one who would take it off his hands.

"But the horse is mine, is it?"

"Dot horse is yours ven I geds mine montsh. Dot ish all righd; I drusts you. But I dinks me all der vile vot vos dot pizness lasd nighd? How vos id anyvay, berhabs?"

"It turned out to be rather a sad affair, sir," suggested Bill Cortland, and just then the two musicians awoke from their drunken slumbers and stupidly joined the company.

But the boys were too much interested in Bob's purchase to take much notice of those broken-up individuals, and leaving them to make up with Backstrap as best they could, they did not even heed the breakfast-bell until they had accompanied Bob, who led his horse down to his pasture.

Of course Backstrap and the musicians tried to have an understanding after he got them washed up and into the breakfast-room, but it was a useless task, for neither of them had any more idea of the truth of the business than the man in the moon.

But at the breakfast-table Backstrap gave the boys a surprise by stating that he had concluded to give them a holiday, and with glad shouts they started for a day's sport, while the professor and the two demoralized musicians concluded to use up the day in making repairs,

he to do so at home, and they on their return to New York.

"Now, then, fellows, for some fun!" said Bob, as he led the way down to the barn to get possession of the saddle and bridle, followed by the entire school.

Soggy, however, kicked, and refused to let them take the things until they had the professor's word for it, which they soon got, but at the same time making up their minds that they would have some fun with the Yorkshireman to pay him for his obstinacy,

CHAPTER XIV.

BOB ROLICK owned a horse!

He was the proprietor of *Potato Bug*, the nag that had formerly belonged to Professor Backstrap, and with which he and the boys had had so much fun, including the getting of him drunk on the night of the professor's proposed "Harvest Home."

And while the old horse was staggering about the place and Backstrap had come to the conclusion that he was simply good for crow-bait, and had made up his mind to shoot him, Bob had bought him for twenty dollars, while the other boys had agreed to put in and buy the saddle and bridle, so that they could take turns at riding horseback.

Oh! there appeared to be heaps of fun in store, and, on account of Backstrap's being so badly broken up from that "Harvest Home" racket, he had concluded to have no school that day, and so the boys had all followed Bob down to the barn to get possession of the bridle and saddle, so that they might commence the fun that very day.

Soggy would not deliver the articles until convinced that the professor had really sold them, and for this piece of obstinacy they resolved to make it lively for him.

But finally they secured the trappings and went for old *Potato Bug*, who had been put back into the pasture again.

He was still groggy, and they found him with his head hanging down, and looking about as badly broken up as a human being would who was just getting over a spree.

The boys had all been informed about the matter, a few of whom knew how it was themselves, and the idea of the old horse being drunk formed a jolly topic for conversation, together with the mystery attending the action of the sweet cider the night before.

"Whoa, *Buggy!*" cried Bob, approaching the old horse. "What's the matter—got 'em on you this morning? You'd better brace up and swear off, old man; you are getting too old to go out nights on jamborees."

"Oh, he's got a head on him, sure," said Joe Bimm, laughing.

"Well, I should say so," said Bill Cortland. "Out on a racket last night, was you?"

"Look at his ears! There's no stiffening in them," said "Skinny" Pearse, prodding the nag with a pin.

But he never took the slightest notice of it. He didn't even wink or flop his ears. He was evidently a used-up crowd.

"Go and get a bucket of water; he must feel the same way as I did this morning," said Tom Burnes, who had taken an awful dose of that cider.

"That's so, wet his whistle!"

"Make him a cocktail!" and other suggestions were indulged in while Joe Bimm was bringing a bucket of water for the poor old nag.

He drank it as though half choked, but it did not appear to touch the right spot. Then they tried him with a handful of fresh clover, but he didn't appear to have any appetite.

"Oh, he wants some exercise; that's what's the matter with him, I guess," said one of them.

"Maybe that's so," said Bob. "We'll give him a little, and then perhaps he'll have an appetite for his breakfast."

So Bob put on the saddle and bridle, to all of which the horse made not the slightest objection. In fact, they might have piled a house on top of him without his kicking.

"Whoa, *Potato Bug!*" said Joe.

"Oh, he'll whoa, never fear. Whoaing is his best hold this morning," said Bill Cortland.

"He must have taken in an awful load of that temperance cider," suggested Frank Sleight.

Bob no sooner got him caparisoned than he vaulted into the saddle, and pulled his head up with the bridle.

"Brace up and get up!" said he; but old *Potato Bug* took not the slightest notice of it.

"Somebody get me a switch. Ah! that one will do, Jerry; let me have it," and taking it, he began to lace him.

But all to no purpose. He took no more notice of it than he would have of a fly; he didn't even switch his scraggy tail.

Presently a half dozen of the boys got sticks, and tried to urge the old horse out of his tracks; and several of them prodded him with pins. But he took no notice of it at all, and continued to stand there like a rock.

"Let's build a fire under him!" suggested Joe.

"Not while I am on him, if I know myself," spoke up Bob Rollick.

"What a horse!"

"What'll you take for him, Bob?"

"Put a chestnut burr under his tail!"

"Yes, try that," said Bob, and three or four of the fellows ran to a chestnut tree that grew near the pasture fence, and presently one of the burrs was placed beneath his tail.

But he took no notice of it whatever, and Bob began to think he would really have to build a fire under him in order to get him to move out of his tracks. Two of them pulled at the bit, but they evidently might have pulled his head off without moving his body.

Indeed, they did everything they could think of to start the horse, but he remained rooted to the ground and would not budge an inch.

This, of course, became dull sport, and so after trying for nearly an hour, they removed the saddle and bridle, and concluded to give it up for a bad job, or at all events to abandon the undertaking until some future time.

Of course the fellows made all sorts of fun of Bob Rollick's stationary horse. They called him a wooden horse, a cast-iron horse, and bantered him about placing him on a lawn somewhere for an ornament.

But Bob took it all in good part and joined in it himself, although, to tell the truth, it was a little more of a horse than he had bargained for, or not quite so much of a one.

"What will you take for him, Bob?" asked Bill Cortland, laughing with the others.

"Ten dollars, Bill."

"A ten-dollar Bill."

"Yes, and I'll guarantee that he will not shy, that he is not frightened at the cars, and that you can shoot a charge of shot into him without his running away," replied Bob.

"Well, I'd like to have a horse that will run away once in awhile."

"Then this isn't the kind of a nag you want. This is a monthly horse."

"Besides, I want a horse that has temperate habits, not a bummer."

"No, one bummer is enough."

And so they laughed and chaffed until they got tired of it, and finally went back to the barn with the saddle and bridle, where they found Soggy enjoying a cock-fight on the barn floor all to himself.

Here was sport that interested them at once, and they were not long in tumbling to it that Soggy indulged in this sort of sport quite often for his own amusement, and had managed to keep it away from everybody.

In fact, while he had been in Backstrap's employ, he had bred or obtained in some other way half a dozen game chickens, a pair of which he fought nearly every day.

"All right for you, Soggy," said Bob; "we tumble to your racket, but if you don't let us into it we will give it all away to the old man."

"Why, lad, thee can come in un' see the spurt," replied Soggy, honestly. "But thee won't tell the ould mun, will thee?"

"We'll never give you away, Soggy, if you will let us in all the time."

"Then gather in, lads."

And they did gather in to see one of the most beautiful cock-fights that they had ever witness-

ed. Indeed, Soggy treated them to two good mains in honor of their holiday.

This opened a new field of sport for them, and every day afterward they would stealthily gather at the barn to enjoy it, Soggy being an expert at handling game-cocks.

As for poor old Potato Bug, it took him all that day to recover from the effects of his spree. In fact, he lay down and slept nearly all the time, but toward night he got up and began to nibble around at the grass a little.

Bob watched him carefully, giving him all the water and fodder he wanted, and the next

"Bud who make 'em fight?"

"Nobody; they fight themselves just for fun."

"Dot vos some gread fun, I dinks. Sdop 'em!" he demanded.

"We can't, sir. We have been trying to stop them, but they won't stop."

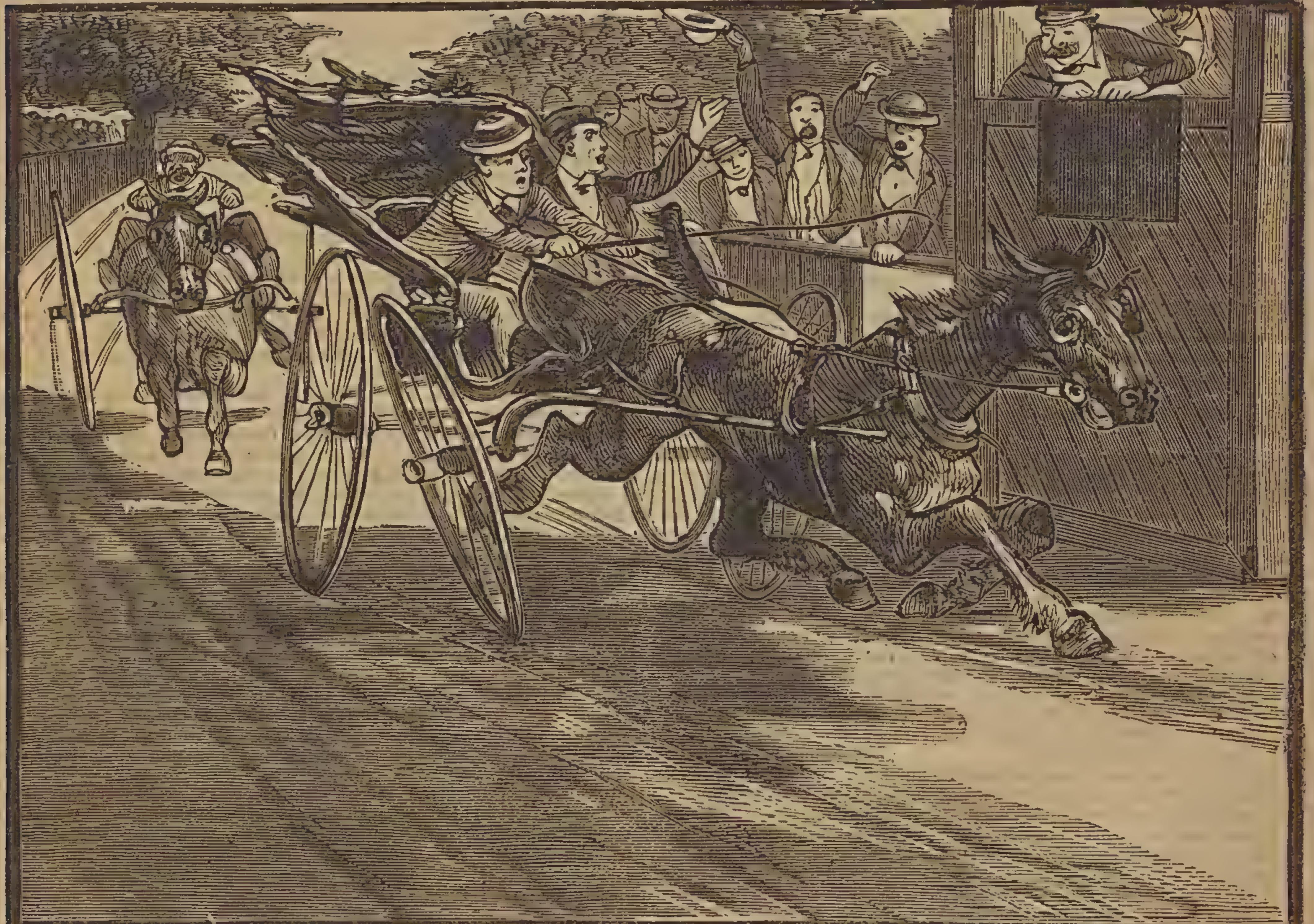
"I bade you dot I sdop 'em," he growled, trying to catch one of the birds, both of whom had on sharp steel gaffs, almost like needles.

His first attempt was a failure, but of course he did not give it up so. Anybody knows how-

be separated, and after he had thought the matter over for awhile, he concluded that he would put a stop to that sort of sport by ordering Soggy to kill the two birds and hand them over to the cook for some undressed manipulation.

The gardener circumvented this, however, by killing two ordinary "dung-hills," and keeping the game cocks for future amusement. But the others tasted just as good when cooked, and as the irate professor gorged himself upon them, he muttered:

"How vos dot for fighd? I bade you dot I hafe so much fun ash you do now," and then he



When Bob drove under the wire, a clean winner by three lengths, it did seem as though everybody was determined to yell the top of their heads off. "The old nag wins!"

day he had so far recovered that he was enabled to take a short ride on him.

From that time forth the interest of the boys was divided between horse-back riding and cock-fighting, both of which they enjoyed hugely.

But instead of its being worse for Potato Bug, the fact of his changing owners, it proved to be much better, for now he was common property, and every boy in school felt it to be his duty to get him something nice every day. So he began to show improvement, and to fat-up almost from the day of the sale, although if the truth had been known, Backstrap would have kicked most likely, for the old nag was fed out of his provender nearly always.

However, the professor was glad enough to get rid of the animal, and so long as he had received his price for him, he did not mind how much time the boys spent out of school hours in tending and having sport with him.

But one day he went to the barn while a cock-fight was in progress, and as such a thing was contrary to his notions of right, he protested.

"Hey! how vos dot aboud dem pirds?" was his first exclamation.

"They are fighting, sir," said Bob Rollick, just as though a blind man would not have known as much.

ever, that it is almost impossible to stop two game-cocks when engaged in battle.

On making the second attempt, one of the cocks struck him with his spurs, giving him an ugly wound in the hand.

Then was the old man mad. Then did he indulge in the wildest kind of exclamatory broken English, and making a savage kick at them, his feet flew out from under him, and he dropped three hundred pounds of meat on that unyielding barn floor, while the boys ran laughing from the place.

What he had said before was baby talk, compared with what he gave utterance to as he slowly picked himself up from the floor, but do his best, he could not part the roosters, who finally got out into the barnyard, and continued the fight.

"Fight you tame beats off if I care," he finally growled, limping out of the barn, but swearing vengeance on somebody.

When the boys, who had been hiding behind the fence, saw him go toward the house, they again went into the yard to see the fight out, although Soggy was dreadfully nervous for fear the blame of the whole thing would fall on him.

The persistency of the roosters, however, convinced Professor Backstrap that what Bob Rollick had told him was true; that they could not

laughed and shook himself gleefully, and taking up one of the legs and thinking that, perhaps, it might be the same one that put a spur into him, he smashed it, bone and all, between his big jaws. "Ah! I bade you dot you kick me no more already."

Of course the boys enjoyed a good laugh at the old man's expense when he came so to grief while attempting to part the roosters, but Bob Rollick came to the conclusion that it was about time that the old fellow had another old-fashioned racket played on him, and so he began to think up something that he could work.

He thought of several things, but he could not work them without employing several of the boys to assist him, and this he did not wish to do if he could help it, his idea being to confine everything to Joe Bimm and himself.

But while he was thinking it over, Miss Guarley came from New York to make him a visit, when, of course, he had to be on his good behavior.

He showed her his horse, and entertained her with an account of how he came to be the owner of it, although, of course, he did not tell her about the two gallons of apple-jack that he poured into the barrel of sweet cider, and which had created such a sensation.

She was pleased with his progress (for the

professor gave an excellent account of him), and finally assured him that, if he liked to ride horseback, she would buy him a nice saddle horse.

But Bob assured her that *Potato Bug* was a splendid horse, and that he and the boys enjoyed more fun with him than they could with the finest and fastest horse in the land.

"Very well, Robert, dear, but don't let your mind run too much to fun, as you call it, and above all things, don't learn to be rude; don't keep company with boys who think more of mischief than they do of learning," she said.

"Oh, certainly not. I don't care much for fun, only riding the old horse and playing ball."

"I am glad to hear it. Now kiss me, Robert, for I must take the next train back to New York," said the old maid, puckering up her mouth.

Bob was equal to it, as he was to almost everything, and he not only kissed her, but he escorted her to the depot, to her evident delight, for he had grown to be a very handsome, manly fellow; such a one as had never favored her with an escort before.

But now the question was, what sort of a job could he put up on Backstrap to have some fun with him?

At first he thought of the bell which the old man had caused to be put in his room, with a wire running to his own so that he could summon him quickly at any time, for it will be remembered that Bob had been made his private and special detective for the purpose of finding out who it was that was playing so many tricks upon him. But he finally concluded that it would be too risky, since it was almost impossible for any one to get at either the bell or the wire, with the exception of Backstrap and Joe and himself.

And so he watched and waited for a week or more before he hit upon anything, during which time he and the other fellows had heaps of fun with old *Potato Bug*, who was picking up nicely, and becoming more frisky and coltish every day. Indeed, Backstrap began to think he wasn't such a bad horse after all, and felt a trifle sorry to think he had sold him so cheaply. And it was a fact that a livery stable keeper in the village, and something of a sport, had offered Bob seventy-five dollars for the horse, feeling certain that he was an old broken-down racer who had lots of go in him yet.

But Bob just then was thinking of fun for himself and friends, and had no idea of parting with anything that would produce it.

"Joe," said he to his chum one day, "I think I know of a way to frighten the heart out of his nibs."

"All right; what is it?" asked Joe.

"You know how afraid he is of fire?"

"Certainly. Don't you remember how frightened he got in the school-room one day because he thought he smelled something burning?"

"Yes; we came very near getting a half holiday out of that," replied Bob, laughing heartily.

"And we should if it hadn't been for Skinny Pearse giving it away that he threw a piece of rubber in the stove."

"Well, now, this is my racket: I have noticed that he always leaves the key of his door on the outside, though he probably bolts it on the inside when he goes to bed. Now it would be a neat job to lock him into his room and smoke him."

"But how can we do it?"

"I'll tell you. We will get a couple of pipes down to the store, get some sweet fern or something of the kind, and after he has gone to bed we can blow the smoke through the keyhole into his room. He will soon smell it and think the house is on fire."

"That's so. Get two pipes, and while you blow the smoke through the keyhole I will blow it under the door. But we ought to have somebody to help us."

"Why so?"

"Well, the first thing he will do will be to ring the bell for you when he finds he can't get out of his room," said Joe.

"That's so. We'll take Bill Cortland into it, eh?"

"Bill is a good one."

"All right; that settles it. You go down and get the pipes this evening, and I'll fix everything else," and so the whole business was arranged.

The next night Bob and Joe waited until the light in Backstrap's room had been blown out, and leaving Bill on watch in their room, with orders to join them the moment the bell rang, they stole up into his entry and removing the key, placed it on the floor near by, so that it should appear to have dropped out of the lock if investigation was made, and then they began their business.

Lighting the pipe, which had been filled with sweet fern leaves, Bob quietly pushed the stem into the key-hole, and taking the mouth of the bowl into his lips, he blew a perfect stream of smoke into the room, while Joe did the same thing under the door. In a few moments Backstrap smelled it, and sat up in bed to snuff and speculate. Then he concluded that something was wrong, and leaped out of bed to light his lamp, which he did hurriedly. The room was full of smoke, and he saw it entering the key-hole and around the door.

"Cot in Himmel der house vas on fire! Fire, fire, fire!" they heard him call, and then he tried to open the door, which, of course, was locked. "Moly Hoses! I shall be roast!" and then they heard him pull the bell to Bob's room, and throw up the window and shout fire some more.

Blowing in their last puffs, they hurried down-stairs to meet Bill, throwing away their pipes as they did so, but taking care not to be seen, for the old fellow was leaning out of the window and yelling fire for all his lungs were worth. But meeting Bill, they all appeared under his window and asked him what the matter was.

"Madder? Donder und blitzen! but der house is on fire, und I am locked in! Come ub und unlock dot door righd away!" he cried, and Bob hurried up-stairs to obey, in his mind.

"The door is locked," he called to him, from the outside of his room.

"Unlock id!" cried the professor, in terror.

"I cannot; there is no key here, sir."

"Donder und plazes! I shall roast! Go for de ladder."

Bob rushed down-stairs, and by this time Joe and Bill had aroused everybody by their cries of fire. The old man stood at the window in his night shirt, frightened half to death.

"The barn is locked, and we cannot get the ladder; the house is all on fire!" said Bill Cortland.

"Oh, mine Cot in Himmel!" groaned Backstrap, whose wild imagination made him actually feel the fire.

"Have you got an umbrella?" asked Bob.

"Yaw, und fot was dot?"

"Open it and jump from the window with it; you will come down easy."

The suggestion was a good one in a desperate case; and as he regarded this as one of that kind, he turned and caught up his huge, old-fashioned umbrella.

Opening it, he thrust it out and then crawled upon the window ledge, so terrified that he was all the while liable to tumble off.

"Now, jump, sir; it's all right!" called Bob and two or three others.

Scarcely knowing what he did, but anxious to save his life, he jumped.

The old umbrella turned wrong side out before he got half-way down, and he landed with his bare legs in a clump of thorn bushes.

He yelled bloody murder, and the boys rushed to his rescue and pulled him out of his predicament.

He was not hurt beyond the scratches he had received from the thorns, but that was all he wanted, and then he rushed away a few yards to take a look at the supposed burning building.

CHAPTER XV.

"VARE vos dot fire?" demanded Backstrap, as he stood there in the garden, trembling with fear and excitement, and looking in vain for it up at the window from which he had jumped.

"I don't know, sir," replied Bob Rolick. "I didn't see any fire."

"Ish dot so!" exclaimed the old man.

"You rang my bell, and when we came we heard you yelling fire—that's all I know about it. Did you see any fire, fellows?" he asked, turning to the crowd of scholars standing around.

"No, but we heard somebody shouting fire!"

"That was Professor Backstrap. What was it, sir, anyway?" asked the smooth-faced rogue.

"Mine Gott in Himmel, but my door vos lock."

"Yes, sir. I tried to get in as you told me to, but there was no key on the outside."

"Und dere vos smoge come in my room?"

"Well, perhaps there is a fire up there somewhere. Let's go up and see. Some fellows go for buckets of water!" cried Bob, starting to go up the stairs leading to the professor's rooms.

The old man was so completely paralyzed that he could scarcely move or speak, for the fright and jar he had received proved almost too much for him; but in spite of his bleeding legs and torn night-gown he followed the boys.

Not finding the key—because they did not wish to—three or four of them threw their weight against the professor's door and burst it open.

They entered, followed by the professor.

"Ah! I smell smoke!" cried Bob.

"So do I. Where's the fire?" asked Joe Bimm, looking eagerly around in quest of it, although of course he knew he should not find it.

"Oh, mine crickey, bud dod vos gweer!" moaned Backstrap, in a dazed sort of a way.

"I don't see any fire, sir," said Bob, presently.

"There's no fire here, sir," said Bill Cortland, who was nearly ready to burst with laughter as he thought of the farce that had been enacted.

"Dot vos so gweer. I schmell dot smoge, und pimepy id vake me ub und I see id come in around dot door und dot keyhole," said the old fellow, at which Bob and two or three others sprang to it, and made a closer examination of the door, even smelling of it.

"Are you sure that you wasn't dreaming, sir?"

"But how can I tream dot I schmell und see smoge, hey?" he demanded.

"I cannot account for it, sir, but it is quite evident that there is no fire around here."

"Go ub stairs und schmell aboud. Maybe der vos some sbondaneous gumbustions somever," and the boys went up-stairs with the lamp, leaving the professor there in the darkness of his own room.

But he improved the opportunity by getting out of his tattered night-gown and into his trousers, although in his excitement he got them on hind-side fore, and presented a comical picture when they returned with the light and reported that there were no signs of either fire or smoke up-stairs.

"Id vos so gweer about dot," he mused, and some of the fellows were obliged to get out of the room in order to keep from laughing in his face as they beheld the comical picture he made.

Backstrap fell into a reflective mood, and appeared to be debating with himself as to whether he had been dreaming or not, and as Bob was anxious to get away where he could enjoy a laugh, he told him to ring the bell if he smelled anything like smoke again, and then withdrew from the room.

Professor Backstrap was the most completely bewildered Dutchman that was ever seen, and the idea of going to bed to sleep was as far from his mind as the north pole was from his body.

"Dot vos somedings dot I can'd mage owit," he mused, when left alone, but if he could have seen into Bob Rolick's room just then, he would have been able to make it all out, and to have taken a 'tumble' that would have laid away over the jump he had lately made from the window. "I schmell him nod now," he added, snuffing around. "Maype id vos a choke dot I play on myself mit treaming. Maype id vos a choke dot somebody blay on me all der vile. Maype I vos a tame fool aboud myself; maype blendy dings dot I don'd know noddings boud. Maype I vos go grazy, und don'd know somedings aboud noddings. Und dem poys, dey lafe aboud me, und say I vos go off my nud, und puddy much I guess I vos. Maype dot my

sdom ach vos owit ofe repairs, und dot I petter have me some bills und dings."

He took another careful look about the room to see if there remained anything suspicious, after which he closed and bolted his door, and then got into bed with his trousers on, but not to sleep for a long time—no, no.

Bob Rollick and his chums enjoyed a good hour's laugh after returning to his room, each one taking turns in bringing out the comical and ridiculous phases of the racket, and, as before stated, could the old man have seen and listened, he never would have puzzled his brains

saw "Skinny" Pearse in the act of throwing something else at him.

The old fellow's blood was away up now, and lifting Bill to his feet, he went for that fat boy as a cat would go for a mouse.

Pulling him down the aisle, he bounced him over that stool as easily as a cook would turn a flapjack, and, oh, murder! how he just did warm his meat for him!

"Skinny" squealed like a stuck pig, but it did him no good, and it was not until he had given him all he thought he deserved that he let up on him.

and the fun they had with him. Well, the boys fed him up so well that he began to take on some style, and to show that he had a wonderful lot of go in him; although he had got so old that it was impossible to get any fat on his bones.

Of course he was laughed at whenever he went to the village, as Professor Backstrap had been when he owned and used him as a saddle-horse, but that only pleased Bob, and the worse he could make him look the better he was suited, especially if he could only pick up some fresh fellow who would challenge him to a race, nine



Every time that Backstrap threw back his head and opened his mouth for a sneeze, it was a question whether he would throw off the roof of his head or the roof of the school-house when the explosion came.

over the matter any more or lost any further sleep.

The next morning he did not put in an appearance at breakfast, and the boys had things all their own way. But he disappointed those who had an idea that he would not keep school that day, by coming in at the last moment, looking badly broken up, and still sorely puzzled.

"Der vos some misdakes aboud dot fire lasd nighd dot vos nod, bud pimepy somedimes I find owit aboud id maype. Dink no more dings aboud it, bud go on mit your studies," said he, seriously, and then, happening to look up he saw Bill Cortland laughing.

"Ha! Dot vos funny pizness, hey? I chust show you dot id vos nod. Come owit here, Masder Pill Gortland; I show you how funny dot vos, I bade you," and seizing his ruler, he went for poor Bill, seized him by the collar of his jacket, and jerked him over that well known stool of repentance, and went for his tenderloin.

It did seem as though he never enjoyed flogging a boy so much as he did this one. It probably relieved his pent up feelings, as it did Bill's, and he might not have stopped so soon as he did, had not an apple-core struck him on the back of the head, and turning quickly, he

"Now, how aboud dot funny pizness? Go mit your sead. Maype nod dot I sdand so much nonsense all der vile. I bade you dot I have some order in dis school, or dere will be blenky poys as cannot sed down puddy vell," and he glared around to see if there were any other candidates who wished to be put through.

But they were all poring over their books and looking sober enough for a funeral. Indeed, they were not long in finding out that the old fellow was in no humor to be trifled with, although they all wanted to laugh because he was badly out of humor on account of the fire racket.

That was a nice, quiet school all that day, the only uneasy ones being Bill Cortland and Skinny Pearse, and they were so because they couldn't sit still.

But such things are soon forgotten at a school, although the fellows who go over the stool are not apt to forget it so quickly as the others.

And, therefore, it is not to be wondered at that the boys were again at their sports and pranks just as though nothing had happened.

It wasn't a great while from that time that Bob Rollick managed to have some sport with his old horse, Potato Bug, and perhaps I may as well tell you about it right here.

You remember all about his buying the old nag

out of ten, of whom he could beat with perfect ease.

One day he came across about the worst-looking old buggy that was ever seen; indeed, it looked worse than Potato Bug did, and he bought it for five dollars, together with a harness that was a good match.

He got a wheelwright to go over it and mend the works wherever there appeared any danger of their giving out, and in this way made it quite safe, without making it look any the less rusty.

In this old buggy he was sure to raise a big laugh whenever he went out to drive, and both he and Joe Bimm had loads of fun with the comical old turn-out.

About this time there was a county fair to be holden at Mineola, a few miles distant, and as the scholars had permission to attend it one of the days, Bob concluded to go in his turn-out, feeling sure of having some sport.

He took Joe with him, for they seldom went anywhere alone, while sevral of the other fellows went by railroad.

They both dressed so as to look as much like country lads as possible, and all along the road they were greeted with laughter and cheers.

Going inside of the fair grounds, they tied the

old nag to a post, and began to go around and take in the sights and hear the sounds.

But a crowd soon gathered around old *Potato Bug*, and in less than half an hour he became the center of attraction, nothing else at the fair collecting such a crowd of laughing visitors.

And the comical comments that were made at his expense elicited shouts of laughter, until even horsemen began to gather around to see the crow bait. The trot was the only thing that was able to draw away the crowd, and after it was over, Bob and Joe got into the buggy, and looking as sober as owls, began to drive slowly around the track.

And then went up another shout, which attracted everybody to see the sight, although they both pretended to feel abashed at the attention they aroused.

"What is it?"

"Hear his bones rattle!"

"There goes the prize crow!"

"Let him out, young fellows!"

"Where did you find it?"

"Is it alive?" and a hundred other questions and comments were made, all of which provoked roars of laughter, although Bob pretended to be trying to urge the old rack-o-bones along so as to escape the crowd and the sensation he was creating.

But *Potato Bug* knew when he was actually wanted to go, and so he wabbled slowly along, dragging the even more wobbly buggy after him around the track.

"I say, Johnny, what will you take for that skeleton?" asked a very fresh rooster, driving up alongside of him in a racing sulky.

"Don't want to sell him," quietly replied Bob.

"Well, I would if I was you; I'd sell him to Barnum for his Living Skeleton to ride," replied the very fresh youth with the fancy horse, whereat there was another loud laugh.

"What's the inatter with this horse, anyway?" Bob finally asked, pulling him up, when he was quickly surrounded by a crowd.

"Oh, nothing; only I'd like to know where you got him, that's all," replied Mr. Fresh, also pulling up for the purpose of chaffing.

"It's none of your business where I got him, Mr. Fresh. He is good enough for me. I suppose you think your funny nag is the best, don't you?"

The crowd roared at this suggestion, and two or three called to the other fellow to challenge him for a spin around the track, just to make sport.

"How fast can he go, Johnny?"

"He can go faster than yours can," replied Bob, and it did seem as though people would wear their throats out laughing and yelling.

"Try him once around the track, sonny," cried an old horse jockey.

"I'll bet him twenty-five dollars that I can beat him once around the track, just as we stand," said Bob, resolutely.

"Try him, Hen," said several.

"Oh, I don't want to take the boy's money. But if you think there's any go in the old crow, I'll drive once around for five dollars."

"No, sir. Twenty-five up or shut up. I've got twenty-five here that says I can beat you, if you are so fresh and airy," said Bob, flourishing it.

This instantly created a feeling in his favor, and presently the crowd began to chaff the fresh young horseman, who finally concluded that he would get laughed at any way, and so he produced the money and called upon one of the officers of the fair to hold it.

Bob also handed him his.

"Now, I'll bet ten even that we beat him," said Joe, flourishing a ten-dollar bill.

"I'll scoop that bet," said somebody in the crowd, evidently a friend of the horseman.

"When you win it," added Joe, handing his money to the stake-holder.

By this time the excitement run high, and everything else was forgotten for the moment.

Joe jumped out of the buggy, so as to give both Bob and the old horse the best chance he could, and this comical match started towards the judges' stand for the purpose of scoring and

getting the worl to go, while several bets were made among the crowd.

Finally the judge gave the word and off they went about even, Bob's old buggy making a deuce of a racket as the old horse let himself out.

Whew! great snakes! how they did go!

For the first half mile it was nip and tuck, but soon afterwards *Potato Bug* began to pull ahead amid loud cheers of the spectators.

The man with the sulky and fancy horse put the gad to his animal and so did Bob, just enough to put the *Bug* down to his best work, and on account of the noise which his old buggy made the fancy horse became frightened so that he broke badly, and before his owner could get him down to business again, Bob was at least four lengths ahead and gaining all the while.

There never was so much excitement seen on that trotting course before.

People swung their hats, yelled, laughed, hurrahed, and cut up all sorts of monkey shiness, and when presently Bob drove under the wire, a clean winner by three lengths, it did seem as though everybody was determined to yell the top of their heads off.

"The old nag wins!"

"Three cheers for the old crow!" and then when the beaten, crestfallen Mr. Fresh came up, he was received with a storm of hisses, cat-calls, and derisive laughter.

Indeed, it was a big triumph for Bob, and when the judge hung out the board with the time, "1-2 mile, 1-45," marked on it, the cheers broke forth again, and the people began to crowd around old *Potato Bug* and to indulge in all sorts of comments and speculations.

"I tell you he's Dexter in disguise!" cried one enthusiastic countryman, "and I don't believe he half tried!"

"The stakes are yours, young man, and you won handsomely," said the stakeholder, handing over the money to Bob and Joe.

"What'll you take for that horse?" asked a jockey.

"He isn't for sale. He's my favorite nag," said Bob, laughing, and pocketing the stakes.

"Favorite! What for?" asked the beaten horseman.

"For catching suckers," replied Bob, and such a shout as followed it!

The very fresh youth was then a very mad one, but he saw everybody against him, and so turning his horse around, he started slowly away.

"You can't always tell by the look of a cat how far it can jump, old man!" Joe Bimm called after him, "so don't be fresh enough again to make fun of a nag that don't look quite as smart as yours does."

"Oh, go to the deuce!" was all that could be heard of what he said as he drove away, for the crowd was shouting after him.

"Come, *Potato Bug*, get up!" said Bob, and then there was another shout over the name, which struck them as being quite as comical as was the horse and general turnout.

"*Potato Bug!*" was shouted and laughed over by the crowd that followed Bob towards the gate, and all hands were ready to swear that they hadn't had half so much fun since the show began.

As they were about leaving the grounds an enterprising photographer offered Bob ten dollars to allow him to take a picture of his turnout just as it stood, and rather liking the sport of the thing he agreed to it; got the old nag into as good a pose as he could for making a comic picture, and then told the artist to fire away, and he did, well knowing that he could sell any number of them for at least five dollars apiece, and then the jokers drove away, followed by cheers.

That was one of the finest hurrahs that Bob Rollick had ever engaged in, and as they drove homeward they laughed and ate of the many good things they had bought with some of the money they had won.

Several of the boys had seen the racket at the fair-grounds, and of course there was nothing else talked of during the next few days but the great and unexpected triumph of the old horse.

And no one was more interested and enthusi-

astic over it than was Professor Backstrap. He was always a lover of horses and something of a sport in a cheap way, and this victory set him on edge. He was more sorry than ever that he had sold the old nag, for now he saw what he could do with him, and if anything in the world delighted his heart it was getting the best of somebody when there was money to be made out of it.

So he conceived the idea of dressing himself up like a countryman, borrowing *Potato Bug*, and going on the road to wait for suckers.

He hinted to Bob what he had in his mind, and Bob tumbled to it instantly. He saw bushels of fun in the thing, and so favored it.

"How vos dot, hey?" he asked, enthusiastically.

"I should think you could enjoy the fun very much," replied he.

"Dot make me feel so goot!"

"What?"

"I dake dot vot you call *Bodado Pug* owit, und trives him mit dot puggy arout som braces like he vos no goot any more, und pimpy some man he gone along und make laf ad my horse, bud I vink to myself und say puddy goot I guess nod; den dot man he say I vos hafe a pully horse I guess so, und I say he vos putty goot for an old horse, und he say funny dings, und I say I beede you ten tollars dot my horse bead yourn horse righd avay; und den ve race. See how dot vos?"

"Certainly. It will be splendid sport."

"Oh, I guess so, yes! I ge me owit ned Saturday afternoon, und lay for vot you call suggesters."

"Very well; you can take the horse any time you like," replied Bob, and so the matter dropped.

But of course Bob did not fail to tell all the boys about the business, and it was agreed that they would go out and watch the sport.

Backstrap felt so good over the anticipation of catching somebody, that, during the remainder of the week, he was uncommonly good, and never flogged a single one of the fellows.

And when Saturday afternoon arrived he ordered Soggy to bring *Potato Bug* up to the house, and the dress he appeared in was comical in the extreme, being as much like the regular stage Dutchman as can be imagined.

The boys gathered around and cheered him lustily as he took a seat in the buggy, that seemed scarcely able to hold him up, and as he drove slowly away, "vinking at himself," to think what heaps of fun he was going to have, a party of them, headed by Bob Rollick, started out upon the road to watch the result.

"Now, then, for a racket!" whispered Bob, as they started up the hill after him.

"You bet!"

"Backstrap as a sport!"

"Backstrap laying for suckers!" and with many a hearty laugh they followed on.

CHAPTER XVI.

PROFESSOR BACKSTRAP, dressed like a stage Dutchman, out in Bob Rollick's old buggy and behind *Potato Bug*, laying for suckers!

The reader can see the picture.

He drove slowly toward the village, while the boys followed behind to see what would come of the old man's adventure.

"Oh, I guess me maype nod!" he chuckled, as he contemplated the possibilities. "Dis vos a pig lark, und I bade myself dot I hafe some fun and win some money ife I find a sugger," and as he once more looked at the old eel-pot of a horse, the horrible old harness that kept him attached to the worst-looking old ark of a buggy that was ever seen, he laughed outright and hearty.

"Dot poy Rollick is one ofe der poys, I bade you. He like him so much some fun, und he hafe blenly all der vile. Sometimes I knock mine heat mit mine fist und dry to dink aboud somedings dot I don't know aboud. Sometimes I dink dot he knows all aboud dot deviltries dot vos blay on me all der vile, und sometimes I dink no aboud id—he look so innocent."

And so he continued to muse as he allowed old *Potato Bug* to shamble along any way he liked, all the while hoping that somebody would

drive up behind and make fun of his turnout, when he expected to have some fun.

But it showed that he had sort of half-way taken a tumble to Bob Rollick, in some way suspecting that all the mischief, or at all events a large part of it, was originated by this handsome fellow, even if he did possess such a smooth, innocent-looking face, and was so exceedingly artful in covering up his tracks and winning everybody's confidence.

True, he had selected Bob to be his private detective, to see if he could find out who it was who played so many tricks on him, but he almost wished he had not done so, although as yet he had no proof that he was not honest. But the thought that he might not be so, and that he had placed himself more entirely in his hands than ever, made him slightly sick, although at this present time he was only thinking about the fun he hoped to have.

In a few minutes a man drove up behind him in rather a stylish turnout. He glanced at Backstrap and his nag, holding up a trifle so as to get a closer look. It beat anything he had ever seen.

"Oh! dot vos a sugger!" mused Backstrap, while he struggled hard to keep down a grin.

The stranger finally laughed outright, being unable to hold back his mirth any longer, as he gazed on that Dutchman and his turnout.

"Mine frien, maype dot vos funny, hey?" suggested Backstrap, as a good way to open the ball.

"Well, I should say it was," and again the man roared; indeed his horse appeared to be also laughing at the sight, as well he might.

"So maype dot horse und puggy vos a tame fool!" said Backstrap, tauntingly.

"Indeed!" and again the man laughed, for the thing was becoming more comical every moment.

"He vos a sugger; I vos sure of id," thought the disguised professor, as the stranger continued to laugh.

"Where did you get it?" he finally asked.

"I puy him mit money."

"How does he manage to stand?"

"Why, der same vay as yours stands—on his feed."

"On his feed! Well, I shouldn't think he had stood on that much during his life."

"Oh, you vos puddy smard, hey?"

"Where did you get that ancient buggy?"

"I vos a dief, und I sdoe it—did you lose von?" asked Backstrap, bound to keep even with him.

But in this instance he got things mixed in the usual Dutch fashion. He intended to be awfully smart, and say to him, in reply to his question about where he got the buggy, "I stole it from a thief; have you lost one?"

It is a very old retort, but Backstrap couldn't catch on.

"Well, I thought that perhaps the horse, harness and buggy might have been raised together. Guess they were all gotten up about the same year a long while ago, eh?" asked the man, laughing. He was walking his horse, and just keeping pace with the old man, just for the sake of chaffing him.

"Dot vos none ofe mine pizness for you. But I bade you den tollar dot I pead you in half a mile race," said Backstrap; whereat the stranger laughed again.

"Dot vos noddings bud laff, but id dakes monish to make cider mit."

"Well, say, what will you take for the turnout, just as it stands?"

"Dot vos nod for sale."

"Oh, it isn't, eh? Perhaps you are in the show business yourself—perhaps you are Barnum in disguise, and are out giving one of your curiosities a little exercise. Maybe this turnout once belonged to Washington, the father of his country?"

"Dot vos none ofe your pizness mit me. I bade you den tollar dot I can pead you for half a mile."

"Oh, do you really mean it?"

"I bade you dot I do."

"All right; I'll give you even a better chance. We'll start even, and I'll give you fifty dollars if you will pass me in a rod, half-quarter of a mile, half mile, whole mile, or as

far as you wish to drive. How does that strike you?"

"Dot vos puddy goot somedings for me!" chuckled Backstrap, who not only wanted to clutch that "fifty," but to take some of the conceit out of the man, as Bob had done with the fellow at the fair.

"Well, are you ready?"

"Yaw; go id," said Backstrap, giving the old nag a touch with the whip.

Potato Bug instantly let himself out, and began to get in his fine work, actually astonishing the stranger, who didn't believe there was half the amount of go in the old rack-a-bones.

But to do his level best he couldn't come within rods of the other horse, who evidently wasn't half trying, and this made the old man awfully mad.

"Go on aboud dot!" he roared, giving him the gad at every jump.

"Come on, old Sauer Kraut; when are you going to commence business?" called the stranger.

"I show you somedings puddy gwick. Git up!"

But the poor old Bug was evidently doing his level best, and knew, without a doubt, that he could never catch up with the strange trotter.

Then the man held up gradually, allowing Backstrap to get within about a length of him.

"Ah! maype dot horse vos a tame fool!" he cried, as he ran his gain, thinking, of course, that the other horse was doing his best.

But when Potato Bug had just got his nose at the stranger's hind wheel, he gave him just a little check and shot ahead again.

This drove Backstrap nearly wild, and standing up in the old buggy, he began to yell and lash the old horse like the mischief.

And here was where the mischief began, for the bottom of the buggy was not strong enough to sustain his weight, and with a crash he went through it until his feet struck the ground, with the connecting bar between his legs.

"Whoa! whoa! whoa! Sdop! sdop!" he roared, pulling at the reins and trying to get upon his feet.

Finally Potato Bug stopped, and he managed to stand up; but what a fix he was in!

He had broken through, but to save his life he couldn't recover himself; he couldn't get back on account of the pieces of the bottom, which stuck right into him if he attempted to do so.

The stranger never offered to come back to see what the trouble was, but laughing loudly, drove right along with triumphant Dexter, leaving the old Dutchman to get out of his scrape the best he could, and have all the fun to himself.

Poor old Backstrap! The only consolation he could find was in swearing, and he took a belly full of that when he found that he could not pull himself back into the old buggy.

The boys had been watching the performance, and were now running to his rescue as fast as their legs could carry them.

But finding there was no help for it, the old man finally braced himself up, and slowly turned the horse around towards home, all the while walking with his feet on the ground under the buggy, but most painfully.

"Oh, mine Gott in Himmel! Dem vos der vorsd dings dot efer vos. I shall splid mineself before I geds home. Oh, oh! whoa—go slow! I vos der piggest chackass dot ever vos. I vos alvays do somedings dot I pud mine foot in. Ah! dem poys vos come," he added, as he caught sight of them coming up the road.

He would rather have endured almost anything but this, for he knew how ridiculous a sight he was making, and how they would laugh and make fun of him.

But there seemed to be no help for it, for indeed they were close at hand, and he groaned in the anguish of his spirit.

"Why, what has happened, sir?" asked Bob Rollick, the first to reach him.

"Oh, dot vos a shame!"

"What was, sir?"

"I vos jusd pead dot man for fify tollars ven I vos break down like dot," said he, sadly.

"That was too bad, sir; but why don't you get back into the buggy?"

"I can't do id."

"Can't do it! Well, let us assist you."

"No. I vos must hafe a hammer und some dings und a saw to preak dem poards mit."

"Just let me see if something cannot be done. Whoa, Potato Bug!" he called, winking at the other fellows, who stood grinning around.

The horse stopped, and Bob took a look under the buggy, where the professor's fat legs were, with his trousers half way to his knees. He saw that he could easily pull away the broken bottom so as to release him from his unpleasant predicament, but if he did so it would spoil all of their fun of seeing him walk home in this ridiculous style.

"No," said he, pretending to tug hard at a piece of the bottom which pinioned him. "The board will have to be sawed off. The iron strap holds it so that I cannot pull it away."

"I dinks as much," sighed Backstrap.

"But let us lead the horse, so that you can have your hands to assist in keeping your position."

"Dot vos some goot ideas, yaw, I could ga puddy goot if I steady mineself mit mine hants."

"All right," replied Bob, going to the rear, while Joe Bimm went to the off side of the horse's head and took hold near the bit.

"Make him go liddle steady!"

"Yes, sir;" and they started the old nag up, and the old professor as well, of course, while a crowd of laughing boys followed along on either side and behind.

True it was that Backstrap could walk with more ease, but to save his life he could not do so any more gracefully.

But it aggravated him to hear the boys laugh, although how they could have kept from doing so it would be hard to say, for it was a sight that would have made a cast-iron dog laugh.

"Dot vos all righd for you, Masder Pearse, but I bade you dot I shall make dem bantaloons of yours chump de nedx dime in school," said he.

"I arn't laughing any more'n the other fellows are," replied Skinny with his usual whine.

"Dot vos all righd, now; I vos look at you."

"But I can't help laughing, sir."

"Und I bade you dot you cannot help some grying ven I gets hold of you," replied the old professor, between the puffs he was rapidly making on account of his uncomfortable walk.

This turned the laugh the other way a little.

"Serves you right," said Bob. "The idea of laughing at a man in such an unfortunate position. I am ashamed of you," and some of the others looked quite as sober and said the same thing, greatly to Backstrap's relief.

That settled Skinny's hash.

He was in for a flogging then anyhow, and he knew it well enough, which checked his mirth very materially for awhile.

It took nearly half an hour to walk the old man home and release him from the queer bondage in which he had gotten himself, after which he limped away to his room to apply salve and arnica and do what he could to repair damages, leaving the boys to pound each other and finish their laugh over the affair.

Oh, it was lots of fun!

But how was it with Backstrap? Where was the fun that he had expected to have?

If you could have seen him peel himself and examine his scratches and bruises, you would have thought he didn't have much fun.

But it cured him. He had got all he wanted, and he secretly swore to poison that old horse, and burn the harness and buggy.

It took the remainder of Saturday and all of Sunday for him to get braced up, and even when he appeared in school on Monday morning, he limped pretty badly and looked as ugly as a thunder-cloud.

The boys had had quite time enough to get over their laugh, and so they all looked as sober and demure as owis, although the old professor made them all think of it again by his actions.

As for Skinny Pearse, he had concluded that he would surely get that licking that had been promised him, and Joe Bimm told him of a fellow he knew once who used to get whaled every day, but who finally made the master sick by putting some red pepper in the seat of his pantaloons, between the lining and the outer cloth,

and advised him to do the same thing and see if it didn't make Backstrap sick.

The idea tickled the fat boy immensely, and he worked nearly all day Sunday, getting the ample seat of his trousers charged with red pepper.

But, of course, he couldn't keep the thing to himself, and before school time on Monday, nearly every fellow in school knew about the racket, and of course were only too anxious to see the result, not caring a copper for Skinny whether he got hurt or not, so long as they had some fun.

But boys will be boys, you know.

At the same time Skinny had a deeper idea than fun in doing as he did, for, to tell the truth, he was getting sick of being pounded with Backstrap's ruler about five times to any other fellow's one; for, in fact, he was generally yanked over that stool of repentance about every day, and for very trifling things. Indeed, the old man seemed to take especial delight in warming his fat for him, and he thought this might teach him to be more careful.

Yes, the boys all went to their desks and began their studies, glancing cautiously at Backstrap every now and then, and hiding a grin behind a book or slate, or swapping winks when his back was looking at them.

And yet, with all these good boys around him, Professor Backstrap did not appear to be happy. He wanted to flog somebody dreadfully bad, and so he kept a sharp eye on all of them, hoping that one of them at least would give him something resembling an excuse for commencing business.

But they all knew what he wanted, and so fought shy; and lessons went on with grim regularity until nearly recess time, when a slight escape of the red pepper in Skinny's trousers set him and two or three of the fellows who sat near him to sneezing, and, naturally enough, knowing where it came from, to laughing as well.

"Stop dot sneeze!" roared Backstrap, furiously, seizing his ruler and facing them.

"I—I—ar—te—chew!" whooped Fred Worth, who sat just behind Skinny.

"Shud ub, I say!"

"I—I can't—ar—te—chew, whew!" replied Skinny, and this brought things to a focus.

"Come owit here!" he thundered.

"Who?" asked Skinny, meekly, while the whole school was convulsed with pent-up laughter.

"You, confound you! Come owit here, for I owe you one from dot foolishness on Saturday. Come owit here!" he roared.

Poor "Skinny" was in for it again sure, but thought that perhaps he might give Backstrap as good as he gave him nerved him somewhat, and so he marched down upon the floor.

"So! Lay down on dot stool und I vil see aboud dot sneeze; down mit you! Berhaps I hafe some poy dot disobey me ven I tell him to sdob dot sneezing."

Well, the whole school was in a state of great excitement when they saw "Skinny" lay down, and knew that he was "loaded."

The old man didn't get around his subject quite so lively as usual on account of his stiffness, but when he got to work—whew! how he just did lay that old ruler on!

But "Skinny" had not only charged the seat of his trousers with red pepper, but he had put about an inch thick of upholstering in the shape of old stockings or something of the sort, so that the blows he received did not hurt him half so much as he made believe they did.

But every blow set free a puff of red pepper, and after giving him about six, he stopped all at once and began to sneeze.

Sneeze! Why he whooped like a wild Indian, and seemed determined to fling the top of his head off.

"Skinny" was revenged, and laughed all over himself as he lay there, and so did the others, many of whom had already caught a whiff of the red pepper, and were beginning to join the old man and "Skinny" in the sneezing chorus.

In fact, it was a song and dance more than anything else.

Every time that Backstrap threw back his

head and opened his mouth for a sneeze, it was a question whether he would throw off the roof of his head or the roof of the school-house when the explosion came.

And the yell and whoop he gave was not the only thing. You might call them the song, but every time he sneezed—which was just as fast as he could catch his breath—he kicked, and this was the dance.

"One of these kicks hit "Skinny" and knocked him off the stool, while he kept sneezing, once for every time that Backstrap did, until, thinking he was mocking him, he gave him a kick in the direction of his seat, into which he got without loss of time.

Backstrap opened a window, and the boys threw open everything that would make a hole, and kept up the sneeze so vigorously that it was impossible to hear anything, for they were making believe, and at the same time making all the fun they could out of the thing.

"Who vos dot—dot—ar—te—show! I mean how vos dot—ar—te—show! Who vos dot make some dings like—ar—te—show! like dot sneeze all der time?" he managed to ask, but only a chorus of sneezes answered him.

"Dell me somebody aboud dot; dell me, or I—ar—te—show!" he exclaimed, and this time so vehemently that it threw him over backwards upon the floor, bang.

"We have all got 'em, sir," said Bob Rollick.

"Donder und—ar—te—show! I—I bade you dod somebody vos get kill about dot right away, puddy soon. Dot vas de meanest dings dot I—ar—te—show!"

"What is it, sir?" asked Bob.

"I dinks me dot you know about id."

"Me, sir! I smell something in the room that makes me sneeze as the other boys do, but I have no idea what it is," replied Bob, as though hurt at the thought of being suspected.

"Go owit mit your recess und I see aboud dot pimepy already," and they gladly seized their hats and scampered from the school-room.

And how they shouted and whooped when once outside! It was clear, fat fun.

"Now, 'Skinny,' you want to shake that pepper out of your pants before you go in, for he will search you as sure as snakes," said Bob.

And, as the others agreed with him, "Skinny" went out behind the hedge, where he took off his pants, and cutting open the little bag that held the "sneezers," he shook it all out and put them on again, but he did not shake the "stuffing" out of them, for he feared he might need it some time.

This had scarcely been done when the bell rang, and they all marched back into the school-room again, which by this time had become aired once more, and the master had recovered his equilibrium and stood ready to review them.

CHAPTER XVII.

WHEN the boys came in from recess after that sneezing racket, Backstrap watched them in sullen silence for a moment, and then he beckoned to Skinny Pearse, who had been the cause of all the mischief, to come out on the floor.

The fat boy obeyed without a word.

Catching him by the arm, he whirled him around two or three times, whacking him with his ruler on various parts of his person as he did so, then snuffing and waiting to see if any more "sneezes" were developed by the process.

But that red pepper had all been shaken out of his trousers while out at recess, consequently nothing suspicious was observed.

"What is it, sir?" meekly asked Skinny.

"Dot vos chusd vot I vos like to know myself. Vos you hafe any snuff, or some dings like dot?"

"No, sir."

"Dit any poy hafe some snuff?" he asked, turning to the other scholars.

Twenty of them spoke up like little men, and said they never had such a thing, and wouldn't dare to have such a thing.

"Dot vos all righd. I know me some way dot I fint owit aboud id. und don't you forgot it. I hafe stood these foolishings long enough, und

now I vos bound to fint owit all aboud id," said he, pushing Skinny away toward his seat.

And to tell the truth, the old man did seem in earnest, but as they had all seen him the same way dozens of times before, they took but little stock in what he said.

But long threatened comes at last, as the old saying is, and Backstrap *was* in earnest now.

He had stood all this deviltry as long as he could, and he felt that his school would soon become a scandal and a by-word, if he did not find out and expel the author.

So he made arrangements with a private detective, who was to go to the school as a painter, in which capacity he was to find out, if possible, who it was that was putting up all the jobs that were being played, the most of them upon him.

He had been threatening to have the place painted inside and out for several years, and as there was no doubt but that it needed it bad enough, he concluded that this would be a good way to have the work done, and at the same time find out who the spirit of mischief was.

The man was quite as good a detective as he was painter, and not a boy in the school tumbled to the snap, not even Bob Rollick, the smartest of them all.

On the contrary, they played several practical jokes upon him, and made it exceedingly lively for him from first to last.

But Mr. Jones (that was the brush-slinger's name) appeared to take it all in good part. Indeed, he rather seemed to enjoy having his paints mixed when he was out of sight, so that he could surprise himself by slapping a streak of blue or black on to work that he intended for white or some other color. And he didn't seem to get mad when he found a dead cat in one of his paint buckets, or when somebody daubed the handles of his brushes with tar.

Indeed, the boys began to think that he rather enjoyed the rackets that were played upon him; and, finally, for that reason the business ceased to be funny, and at length they all left him alone simply because he wouldn't get mad.

But all this while that painter was getting in his quiet fine work. He could afford to let them play jokes on him, and true enough it was that he enjoyed them.

Meantime, of course, nothing in the world was more natural than that Bob Rollick should keep up his rackets on Professor Backstrap. As for the old horse, Potato Bug, he played so many tricks on travelers that it got so finally the snap played out, and he could get nobody to race with him.

Cold weather was coming on, and so, finally, after all the fun he had, he sold the old nag to a sport living in the vicinity for one hundred dollars, buggy and harness thrown in.

All this had been going on while the painter was working about the place, and while he was seemingly about his work he was quietly pumping some of the younger boys and getting them to tell all they knew about the different rackets that had been played at the place, pretending to be greatly interested in such things, as of course he was.

Little by little, in this way, while painting either on the inside or outside of the building, he managed to worm out all that several boys knew, and he found them all great admirers of Bob Rollick, insisting upon it that there never had been any fun in the school until he came there; that he was the originator of all the snaps that had been played on Professor Backstrap, even to getting Skinny Pearse to put the red pepper in his trousers when he knew he was to get a flogging next day.

All this appeared to interest the painter very much, and boys, when they find that what they are saying interests grown persons, are very apt to go all they know and believe on it, and not only give themselves but their friends away without really intending to do so.

Meanwhile Professor Backstrap was keeping remarkably quiet. His last few mishaps had shaken him up so badly that he felt sick, and now he had made up his mind to find out who the imp of his school was before doing much else.

But of course he kept right along with the school, only he was more quiet, and the boys could see that there was something heavy on

his mind, although they never tumbled to what it was.

And it was while this was going on that Bob put up another job on him.

He knew that the old man was very much afraid of tramps and burglars, and that he kept his double-barreled gun loaded continually for their benefit, should any of them think it worth while to work for his pile.

So Bob conceived the idea of working him on that racket, and to commence with he wrote him the following letter:

"DEAR SIR: While seated in the bar-room of

Going a few days before he wrote the letter, he bought a cheap suit of men's clothes, stating that he wished to make a present of them to some poor man, and these he took to his room, allowing only three or four of the boys to know what was going on.

With a needle and thread he sewed the vest and pants together, and then proceeded to stuff the body thus made full of straw, which Joe Bimm and Bill Cortland had brought from the barn.

And with the assistance of an old hat they

above the top of the fence, and then kicking the fence so as to attract the attention of the old man, they quietly slipped out of the way to where they could see without being seen, or being in range.

The noise was heard by Backstrap, and he felt certain that the burglars were coming.

Throwing up the sash, he seized his gun and peered cautiously out.

The rising moon was just beginning to do a little silverying business, and by its light he thought he saw a man just creeping over the fence.



"Madam, he vos der vorst poy dot ever vos in mine life, und he must leave mine school. I will not have him here anudder day; dake him away!" roared Backstrap, remembering his grievances.

a tavern the other night, I overheard a couple of tramps, who were in there drinking, talking about robbing you. They pretended to know that you have a large amount of money in your room, and that it would be an easy thing to get at it. All they had to do, one of them said, was to scale the fence, break open the lower door, knock you on the head, and then rob you. I consider it my duty to inform you, so that you may be on your guard, for as near as I could find out from their conversation, they intend to try it to-morrow night. So look out for them.

"FRIEND."

Well, when Backstrap received that letter he was wild!

"Cot in himmel, how vos dot?" he exclaimed. "So, so, they would rop me, hey? Vell, I guess nod so much. I bade me dot I know some game better ash ten dimes like dot. Ha, I bade you!" he added, catching up his gun and patting it fondly. "I guess so nod much! Sgale ofer mine fence, hey? Knock me on mine heat mit mineself, hey? Sdeal mine gelt, hey? Vell, I guess so nod much as somedings else, pimepy."

Forewarned is forearmed, and Backstrap was both of these, and so he resolved to have some fun with the fellows who had so quietly laid out to have some with him, and that being arranged and explained, let us turn to Bob Rollick.

made quite a respectable-looking dummy, and had it all ready for the night in question.

But now the question was, how were they to operate it? Bob, however, conceived of a way, and the matter was settled.

Meantime Backstrap had made further preparations to receive the burglars. Not only had he both barrels of his gun loaded with heavy charges, but for fear they would not be enough (for burglars are such hogs), he had bought a pair of navy revolvers, and had them in his room.

Night came on, and the moon came up at about ten o'clock. The old man went on watch at nine, not supposing they would attempt their nefarious business before that time, and when the retiring bell struck he commenced business.

Bob and his chums were also ready for business, although they did not intend to begin it quite as soon as he did.

However, at about ten o'clock, and after everything about the place had got quieted down, they took the dummy and carried it out and around the building, so that they reached the high fence in front of Backstrap's room; the same fence where they had worked the cat racket on him.

Fastening the image to a pole, they shoved it up until about one-half of the body showed

Without ever asking him whether he was a burglar or not, or whether he wanted any lead or not, he took aim at the figure and blazed away, nearly getting knocked over by the kick of the heavily-loaded gun.

He looked again, but there was the "burglar" still on the fence, and unwilling to let such a good chance go, he gave him the other barrel.

But with no better results, however, although that poor dummy was riddled with shot.

"Donder und blitzen, how vos dot?" he mused, after taking another look and seeing the dummy.

"I bade myself dot I vos a fool und didn't put any shot on top of dot powder! But I guess dot pistol will make him sick," he added, taking up one of the big revolvers.

With this he commenced to blaze away, stopping to look after firing each shot.

But, seeing the dummy still there, and thinking that he could not hit it, made him so mad that he could scarcely contain himself, and he kept on until he had sent fourteen balls through it and aroused everybody about the place.

Bob Rollick and the others, together with those who had been aroused by the firing, now rushed upon the scene to learn what had happened.

That painter was also there.

They looked up at Backstrap's window and

saw him standing there, with his eyes fixed on the supposed burglar.

"What's the matter, sir?" asked Bob.

Without making any reply, he hurried downstairs to see if he could fathom the mystery—find out why that burglar didn't fall from the fence and die, as any sensible man would have done who hadn't been shot half so much as this one had been.

"What were you firing at, sir?" asked several of the boys when he came down with an empty revolver in each hand.

"How aboud dot purglar?"

"Burglar—what burglar?" they all asked.

"Dot von up there py der fence," said he, pointing up at the dummy.

"Oh, there he is!" and several of them pointed eagerly to it.

"Have you killed him, sir?" asked Joe.

"I dinks me dot I kill him bout fifty dimes already, but he won't fall down. Guess he must be caught on somedings."

A rush was made for the outside of the fence, the painter going along with Backstrap.

"Here he is!"

"He's dead!"

"You have killed him, sir!" and dozens of other shouts were indulged in by the boys, as they pointed to the scarcely more than visible body of the supposed slaughtered man.

"Py chimminey, I guess he von't rop me some more times righd avay," mused Backstrap.

"But you should not have shot him down like a dog," said the painter.

"I did nod shood him down; I shood him ub," replied the professor.

"But you did not know that he was a robber, and maybe you have killed an innocent man."

"I guess nod much. I saw him climbing ofer dot fence, und I told him vot he do py dot, und he pull a bistol on me. S'pose I vos going ter led him shood me?" he demanded, loudly.

This liked to kill Rob Rollick and the others who were in the secret.

"Well, that certainly puts a different face on the matter. What holds him up there?" the painter asked, going nearer.

"He must be caught on somedings, I guess."

The painter, getting nearer, took hold of the pole that held the dummy in place, and without any trouble pulled it down.

It fell as though weighing only five or six pounds, and the others drew cautiously near.

The painter saw the sell in an instant, and glanced at Bob Bollick, but "that sweet face in the moonlight" gave nothing away.

"Vos he tead?" asked Backstrap, timidly.

"Dead! Well, I should say so," replied the painter, laughing and kicking the dummy.

"How aboud dot?"

"You have been fooled again, that's how it is; the long and the short of it."

"Vot vos dot you say?"

"You have been fooled; it isn't a man at all—only a scare-crow, a dummy."

"Gott in Himmel! is dot so!" he asked, going to and turning it over.

"Yes, and about the worst one I ever saw made a target of," replied the painter.

Backstrap was paralyzed to such an extent that he could not speak. He remembered the racket on that same spot with the sheet-iron cat, but this was by far the worst sell that had ever been played on him.

Bob and the others pretended that they could

not understand it, and when the painter took up the dummy and carried it around into the yard, they followed anxiously and asked Backstrap all sorts of questions about it.

But he had nothing to say, and when they got it into the house where the light was, it was seen that so many shot had riddled it that the stuffing was almost literally knocked out of it.

Backstrap regarded it a moment in silence and then kicked it out of the house, at the same time ordering the others to retire and leave him alone.

He wanted to be alone so that he could let himself out for a big swear, and the boys were glad enough to get away so they could have a laugh. And that painter wanted to join them and hear the comments they made about the racket, and he did. He could but admit that it was one of the best sells he had ever seen or heard of, and he laughed quite as heartily as any of them when recalling what Backstrap had said about the dummy's pulling a pistol on him.

That painter made a point.

As for Backstrap, my pen hasn't got backbone enough to describe either his actions or his feelings. He saw now that the whole thing was a put-up job, and that he would undoubtedly be the laughing-stock of the whole town when it became known.

Who had put the thing up, and would he ever be able to find out who it was? He was too sick to sleep much that night, and although he paced his room the most of the time, he never looked out for any more burglars. He had had enough.

The boys expected a blast from him the next morning, but, greatly to their surprise, he never made the slightest allusion to the matter, and went through with the business of the day just as calm as though nothing had happened.

They didn't know, however, that he and the painter had had an interview that morning.

This affair lasted the fellows for a week or more for a laughing point, during which time the painter made more points. But he had by this time got about through with both his painting and his detective business, although he had given nothing away as yet. He wanted to get all done and ready to go before he did that, or he might get the worst of it himself.

But after everything was finished and he had allowed Backstrap to beat him down on his bill, and he was all ready to return to New York, he said to him:

"That settles for the work. Now I want fifty dollars for my detective business."

"But hafe you find out aboud id?"

"Yes, I have all the proofs here on this paper, to show you and convince you who the boy is who has played all these tricks on you, including the last one."

"Gott in Himmel! who vos dot moy?"

"You will pay my bill?"

"Yaw, dwendy dimes. Who vos id?"

"Your particular favorite—everybody's favorite—Bob Rollick!"

"Donder!" exclaimed the old man, and that appeared to be the extent of his speech; he could say no more—the talk was all knocked out of him.

"I have the proofs all here, together with particulars of other scrapes where you never suspected anybody. He is a perfect prince of slyness and deviltry."

"Oh, mine Gott! sometimes I dinks aboud dot mineself," groaned the old man.

"He bought the clothes and made the dummy, just as I have stated on this paper, and as you can find out by visiting the clothing-store, and although the other boys helped him, yet he was the leading spirit, as he is in all mischief."

It was a complete give-away. Backstrap paid the fifty dollars, and the detective left town. What to do he did not know at first, but, after investigating the detective's work for a week or so, he finally concluded to expel Bob from his school, and so wrote a letter at once to Miss Gnarley, the homely but good old maid, who had taken such a liking to him and had placed him at the school.

But she refused to believe a word of what the professor told her about Bob. She believed in him, and that was enough. All the professors in the world could not convince her that Bob had done anything wrong after he told her that it was a mistake, and that he was being blamed for the doings of others!

"You are certainly mistaken, sir. My Robert is too good a boy to do such things."

"Madam, he vos der vorst poy dot ever vos in mine life, and he must leave mine school. I vill not hafe him here anodder day; dake him avay!" roared Backstrap, remembering his grievances.

"Very well; there are other schools besides yours, sir, thank goodness," she replied, smartly.

"I vos glad so too. I don'd care vare he goes, but I vould nod hafe him here at any brice. Dake him away as quick as efer you can."

That settled it. Bob and his friends were greatly taken aback when they learned about that painter detective, and how neatly Backstrap had caught them out. But he was no hand to cry for spilled milk, and so, bracing up, he shook hands and prepared to leave his friends.

"Where do you think you will go, Bob?" asked Joe.

"I don't know, Joe. I don't know what was born for yet. But if I could have my way, I would like to be a drummer for some big store and travel. Oh, there is heaps of fun in it," said he, earnestly.

"Wait until you finish your education, Robert," said Miss Gnarley, who had overheard him, "and then it will be time to decide about business or profession."

"Very well. But you will write to me, won't you, Joe—write and tell me all the news. I hate to leave you more than anything else. We have been good boys together, and you know how unjustly I am accused."

"Yes, Bob, I do," replied Joe, wringing his hand.

"But, Joe, don't forget it; sooner or later I am going to be a drummer, and I would like to have you travel with me. I will keep you posted, however, and we will arrange to meet as often as we can;" and, once more shaking his hand, he turned to the other sorrowing boys and gave them all a good-bye shake.

But they would not part with him in this way, but followed him in a body to the depot, where they sent him off with nine rousing cheers and a tiger.

And so the story of Bob Rollick stops for a while, although at some future time it may be taken up again, when we shall find out what he was born for.

Good-bye, Bob; we'll see you later!

[THE END.]

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